

THE PRINCE FROM THE SEA

A strange story with a strange setting unfolds in the tiny village of Kervily in Brittany. When crippled Marie-Jeanne rescues a man from the sea and nurses him back to life, she calls him Efflam after the Breton prince and saint who slew the dragon that Arthur and his knights failed to subdue. Efflam lives up to his name and the village marvels at his saintly qualities—until the shadow of his real past rises up again to shatter the faith of all but Marie-Jeanne.

THE PRINCE FROM THE SEA

a novel by

SALLY SALMINEN



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THE PEOPLE IN THE BOOK

THE GARREC FAMILY

Guillaume-Marie Garrec	Head of the family. Formerly fisherman, now has a small-holding.
Marie-Suzette	His wife.
Marie-Pierre Buanic	Daughter.
Yves Buanic	Lorry-driver, her husband.
Eliane, Bernadette	Their daughters, school-girl age.
Marie-Louise Le Lay	Daughter.
Marcel Le Lay	Fisherman, her husband.
Blanche-Marie Kérlaérec	Daughter.
Gérard Kérlaérec	Carpenter. her husband.
Lucienne	Their daughter, school age.
Rose Galvez	Youngest daughter.
Corentin Galvez	Naval rating, her husband.
Odile	Their small daughter.
Lucie Kérouant	Daughter.
Paul Kérouant	Her husband.
Birgitte	} Their children
Loulou	
Marie Le Donche Garrec	Widow of François Garrec, Guillaume's brother.
Marie-Jeanne, Caroline	Her daughters and therefore Guillaume's nieces.

OTHER VILLAGERS

Jehan Lescantin	Fisherman.
Madame Lescantin	
Hugo	Their son.
Jegou	The baker.
Amélie Jegou	His sister.
Drezen	A landlord.
Madame Drezen	
Madame Yvonne Stéphan and her children	} Inhabitants of Drezen's house.
Ludwig	
Sixtus	
Le Floch	
Madame Le Floch	
Jacques and Madame Goeffry	
Nonna Goeffrey	
Lazare	A fish-dealer.
His sister-in-law	
Hélias	} Fishermen and neighbours.
Monsieur and Madame Tanneau	
Dr. Guilcher	
Eflam Kelou	Popularly known as Prince Eflam.
Kerlivio	The shoemaker.
Sister Ruth	The village nurse.

Translated from the Swedish by Evelyn Ramsden

CHAPTER ONE

IT WAS AN EARLY FEBRUARY MORNING in the little Breton fishing village of Kervily, four years after the Second World War. The two sisters, Marie-Jeanne and Caroline, had taken advantage of the low tide to collect shell-fish before beginning the work of the day. Not that Marie-Jeanne, the elder of the two, had a definite job of work like Caroline, who was employed in the local canning factory. Marie-Jeanne had always suffered from hip trouble, which was so bad that she might almost be called a cripple—especially as she was also burdened by a hump between her shoulders. Therefore she worked at home, crocheting thread gloves for sale. In spite of all her disabilities, the nineteen-year-old girl limped cheerfully along beside her younger sister.

The girls made for the rocky territory south-west of the village, and their sabots clattered noisily against the stones. They took the rusty old spoons out of the rusty old tins with their home-made wire handles so as to be prepared for any mussel-holes they might see in the sandy parts of the beach. Then Marie-Jeanne stopped and looked out across the beach towards the sea. She rested her body heavily on her shorter leg, thus pushing out her hip on that side so that it looked larger and more misshapen than ever, and drew a breath of deep happiness while a contented smile spread over her broad face, tanned by constant exposure to the salt sea-breezes.

The face of the lame, hunchbacked girl, coarse and heavy though it was, showed distinctive racial characteristics and a unity and strength that made it lovely. It bore traces of the past, of the many types of people who, each in turn or side by side, had inhabited the Breton peninsula and moulded its life and language. These traces led right back past the Franks and the Gauls, the Romans and the Celts, back into the dim antiquity of which the mighty menhirs speak, those great stone monuments which lie scattered about the country.

It was almost low tide and the rocks were showing for almost half a mile out to sea. The ebbing tide had left everywhere gleam-

ing pools and rippling runnels. Caroline ran on in front to a place where there was seaweed. Marie-Jeanne watched her slipping about on the slimy stuff, saw one of her slim legs in its big wooden shoe kick out and flop into a hole so that the water splashed right up to her waist. Then Caroline began to loosen the stones, and the first mussels rattled into the bottom of the pail.

"Come here," shouted Caroline to her elder sister. "Don't stop there, come over here. There are plenty of mussels here, large and full. They're difficult to loosen. I hope you've brought your knife. Hurry up!"

The other sister did not answer. Her eyes swept the sea-shore and finally came to rest on some larger rocks farthest out. Round these the shadows were deep and the rocks stood straight up with black, flat tops, sarcophagus-like, heavy blocks, hung with a mourning-veil of fringed seaweed. The sun was still low over the neighbouring village of Trémeur in the south-east, its rays had hardly reached the low masts of the fishing-boats which lay up against the home pier. But in the opposite direction, beyond the lighthouse, to the west of the village she could see the sunshine glittering on the slate roof of the chapel of La Joie and touching some of the gables of the houses in Saint-Fiacre, the village farthest to the north.

Just then the sun hid itself behind heavy clouds which gave promise of more uncertain weather, and the distant sea, still unruly, turned leaden grey. But far away on the horizon could be seen a silver line, showing that the sun was still shining behind the clouds.

Suddenly the long, straight, silver line grew shorter and was quite rubbed out from east to west. It was as if a heavy finger had been drawn straight along it. Marie-Jeanne's smile disappeared as quickly, and she was serious again. Something was always happening over the headland. The clouds moved more lightly, more quickly over this low, open part of farthest Brittany than they did over the rest of the peninsula. Sun and rain alternated ceaselessly in Marie-Jeanne's flat sea-girt home. Already the clouds were moving away, and although the line at the horizon was blurred, the sun was shining all the more, nearer in, and the sea-licked stones glistening in its rays. The strands of seaweed themselves were irradiated and glowed in the clearest

yellows and reddish browns. Even Marie-Jeanne's thick, black hair was given a deeper lustre by the sun. The high mitre, the the head-dress belonging to her native costume, shone whiter than ever as it stuck straight up into the air like a round, narrow tower. The smoothly varnished wooden shoes flashed in competition with all the rest.

"Hurry up," shouted Caroline, "after all, we've come out to look for shell-fish!" She was squatting down, diligently searching among the seaweed. Nimbly she pushed the blade of her knife under the small creatures which had sucked themselves to the rocks, lying there like peculiar greyish-yellow and brown flowers. Caroline was not dressed like her elder sister in the black velvet of their national dress, nor was she wearing the starched lace mitre head-dress that belonged to it. Her clothes were more modern and gay, and her half-long hair hung freely down to her shoulders.

Sometimes Marie-Jeanne looked enviously at her younger sister as she pushed the comb through her hair in the morning and shook out her curls. Her hair looked so soft and free. She herself did not dare—perhaps did not even wish—to let go the old fashions, those fashions that changed every year and became more and more exacting, so that they were often very troublesome to the busy women. It was also expensive to be dressed as a Bigouden woman if one wanted to keep up to date with all the variations in the fichus and the aprons, with the mitre growing higher and its bands broader and longer.

Yes, it was expensive and it was difficult, but it was also helpful. It helped her, at any rate. It would not have mattered much if she had been just a little lame, for there were many young girls in the district who had something wrong with their hips. They tripped along in a sort of dance-like fashion, and many of the men had a definite weakness for them. But she had the shortest leg of any of them and the added disadvantage of her hump. It was then that the high head-dress, which was a part of the costume worn in the Pont l'Abbé district, was helpful. It gave her the feeling that she was correct and decent—and even taller. Therefore, every day she arranged her hair and put on her mitre. She tied the broad bands inset with lace into as charming a bow as possible just behind one ear, the correct position for it, letting

the bands themselves hang down her back. The mitre stood straight up on the top of the head in such a way that it left most of the hair and the face uncovered, but at the same time it gave the wearer a feeling of stiffness—stiffness under the chin, where the bands were tied, stiffness where the combs and the little firm under-hat squeezed and pressed, stiffness where the many sharp pins were stuck in.

This very fact that it was hard and firm was a help. Here in this outpost on the shores of the Atlantic, where life could be terrifying and insecure, especially for one who could not put her two feet evenly and firmly on the ground, it was strengthening to feel that something strained and fitted resolutely on her head. It made her taller. When she and Caroline walked down the street side by side she was as tall as her sister if her high head-dress were counted in.

"Come here, Marie-Jeanne! Haven't you found anything yet?" cried Caroline, speaking in Breton with the special intonation of the district. Her voice rang out over the bleak stretch of ebb-land.

Her elder sister had found nothing as yet. She had once or twice stuck her spoon into the sand at random, only to find that the sand was too fine or that it was simply blue clay, or that the rock bottom lay too close beneath. There were none of the big, juicy mussels, so good to eat, in the place where she was standing. She had been taken in by a piece of dead shell and had bent down to pick it up, only to throw it away again, half irritated, half amused at her own stupidity. She had fumbled about among the seaweed until her hands were cold and wet, but she was absent-minded this morning, and so had let the heavy fringe of seaweed fall back on to the rock, without looking to see whether there were any mussels there or not. Now she looked out over the open tide-lands, over the grey-green water far away to the broken, shining, silver line of the horizon. For now the beach was again in shadow with the sun shining behind the clouds.

There in front of her lay the ocean, and beyond it were the great lands towards which the sun rode. America lay somewhere over there. Out there the big ships sailed, out there the small boats fished, going sometimes as far away as to Newfoundland. All this she had heard and learnt. But her eyes told her that it

was the Land of the Evening Sun, the land of longing, Heaven perhaps. In this borderland of the horizon, lying between heaven and sea, she sometimes thought she saw the Queen of Heaven walking, Mary pure and mild, Mary the Mother of God, stretching out a white hand towards the darkness of earth, questioning, sorrowful and reproachful. Is it not enough, is it not enough? May I never rest my tired, outstretched arms; must I forever support, pray, weep for and with Him who suffered for you?

Now the diffused rays of light collected themselves together into a new band, forming a sun path, a path of light. A bridge between the unknown and the known.

Caroline called her again, but made no impression on her. Marie-Jeanne was standing so still that the white tower of her head-dress rose up into the air as straight and immovable as the many white chimneys of the houses in the village behind her. Her eyes were nothing but two black lines while her unshaded face was puckered in her efforts to see as far as possible.

Wasn't there something moving out there on the water's edge? Or was it only a rock with the waves rippling round it? Surely the tide had not risen so high yet!

No, it was not a rock. Now she saw more clearly that it was neither a stone nor a rock, but a plank or a log, something that had drifted ashore.

Suddenly she rushed forward. Her head-dress swayed this way and that, and her lameness turned into a hop, skip and jump, for she knew instinctively how to take advantage of her deformity, dashing lightly and quickly across the uneven shore.

Then she stopped as suddenly as she had started, her body stiffening. Her short, round foot in its black felt sock stood on tiptoe within the large, boat-like wooden shoe, and her hip straightened itself out. Something had suddenly occurred to her: perhaps it was a giant tortoise or some other sea animal stranded and unable to get back into the water? It had happened before now that even whales had been left lying on the beach, and the fishermen themselves had often brought in strange sea animals, which were horrible to look at. People came from far and near to see them, and sometimes they were sent to Paris—but it was said that they never arrived there alive.

Perhaps it was a dangerous mine—but no, that was hardly likely, as it was the wrong shape for that. It was narrow—almost like a human-being.

It was probably a drowned man.

Marie-Jeanne walked forward with determination and without calling to her sister, although she looked round for her. Caroline was bent down as before with her head close up against the rock. 'It looks as if she is finding plenty of mussels,' thought the elder girl. 'I will not disturb her. Perhaps I am making a mistake and that thing out there is nothing of importance.' She would go and look for herself, she thought. If it were a drowned man it was obviously something for the police, but anyone who discovered a poor, drifting corpse was obliged to move it so that it was not washed back into the water.

She went on, quite certain that it was a man. The head lay towards her. The shoulders were lifted so high above the edge of the rock that they were silhouetted against the light. She also saw that one arm was bent. It was bare, and she could see the skin of the elbow itself.

She drew nearer and nearer and began to walk more and more slowly for fear of what she might find. At the same time she calmed herself by thinking that it was unlikely to be anyone she knew, for the people from the village knew better than to go out alone on this dangerous low-tide fishing, and that anyhow it was too early in the year for it. The tide did not recede far enough before the next change of moon. So it must be the thing she had first thought—a corpse.

But no—it could not be that either, for there was still life in it.

The arms moved, the head lifted itself slightly, the shoulders were raised and sank back in a new position. For a moment the body lay still, and then the head and shoulders began to move again. It looked as if the man were trying to drag itself higher up the beach.

Her progress became more and more difficult, at last almost impossible. She had to work herself in and out between close-lying, slippery rocks, over crevices and broad chasms, and through water-filled hollows. For a long time it was impossible for her to keep the stranger in full view. Flushed and breathless and trembling feverishly with the stimulation that the atmosphere

in the ebb-land always produces, she finally reached the last high rocks.

Her heart stood still when at last she was able to look round, for she could no longer see the body. Surely the tide had not already come in so far—but sometimes a wave washed unexpectedly higher than the rest and took all that lay within its reach.

Suddenly she saw the thing she was looking for lying in the same place as before. The narrow back and the nape of the neck filled in with hair might well be mistaken for a wet, blue-black stone. The thin, bare limbs made streaks of light as if they were strands of the pale yellow seaweed.

The waves of the incoming tide rose higher and stronger, and every time they broke they left behind them masses of scum-laden water boiling in the runnels. Now and again the scream of gulls was heard. The sea itself was growing calmer, and was a sort of leaden-grey in the shadow of the broad clouds that chilled the atmosphere. But scarcely half a mile out to sea the snow-white surf dashed against the long, low-lying ribbon of reefs, whose pointed, rocky tips stood out from the hissing, thundering water like sharp teeth.

In this outermost ebb-land, close to the never-silent breakers, the tremendous forces of nature were so strongly perceptible that their very wonder took away all fear from the little Kervily girl. Incomprehensible powers seemed over and around her. Solemnly and with long, limping steps, in a strangely soft, almost gliding manner, she walked the last bit of the way, stopped when she reached the body and stooped down, meaning to turn it to look at the face. But it was as if something or somebody stopped her from touching the stranger. She stood there with outstretched arms and open hands as if she were protecting, welcoming. Her breath came and went as she bent over the dripping hair and the brown neck. Sharp shoulder-blades were visible under the violet-blue shirt sticking to his back and shoulders. Faded blue trousers twined round his long legs. His bare feet were bruised and bleeding.

Marie-Jeanne bent over the man and then she lifted her head and looked out over the sea and the reefs to the horizon beyond. Once more the line between sky and sea shone with a light that

was whiter than the glitter of the breakers. She gazed into it, dazzled and fascinated.

She was recalled to the immediate present with a jerk, but she did not alter her position. The man had half lifted himself on to his elbows and was gazing up at her. She herself noticed each detail in the white face. She saw a crown of matted, dark brown hair over a broad, rather low forehead, over which the blood trickled down; cracked, bloodless lips, and a large nose, narrow and strongly hooked, with pinched-in nostrils. Marie-Jeanne knew at once without a moment's hesitation that this eagle's beak, set in this thin face with its large features, was not a Breton nose. It belonged to a real Frenchman, if not to someone still more foreign. There was something sweet and gentle in the brown eyes that were lifted towards her, but she could not really capture his gaze. When she tried to penetrate deeper and get in touch with the person behind those eyes she glided, as it were, into a dream.

From the sharp, spiny rocks on which he had hurt himself so sorely in his battle for life and on which the sea had now abandoned him, he looked up into a pair of long, narrow, quite unfathomable dark eyes. A short, broad face, a full red mouth and a snub nose. This integrated, heavy, and unusual face with its prominent cheek-bones, held his gaze, dragging him out of his half-unconscious state so that he was able to lift his eyelids a little, and then found himself staring at this strange creature's forehead and the roots of her hair, and—what was that thing on the top of her head, something crowning her, as it were, something that rose up white and high against the sparkling light?

Then he saw the hands that were held out towards him in pity and in welcome, and they gave him will-power and strength, and although pain shot red-hot flames before his eyes, he managed to lift himself a little higher. But the bone itself of one of his elbows was badly damaged, and when it touched the rock he fainted again. Yet even in his darkness the outstretched arms and the flower-like hands with their narrow, open petals, followed him. His wounded arm slipped down, but he caught hold with his hand, and while the darkness passed away and his pain burnt

itself out, he managed to keep his head lifted from the rock and to distinguish all that was around him. It was clear, but unreal as a dream.

He saw the hands—the black softness of her dress—the long, open sleeves, which with their great breadth fell from a slender wrist—the strong, brown throat. The face with its sunburn, the cheeks pouching beneath the brown eyes, those strange almond-shaped eyes. The forehead—the curls of hair, and then that odd, white head-dress, through which the sunbeams filtered and gleamed so that the whole thing looked like a high, shining crown.

“Who are you?”

The question was forced from his lips while his mild, brown eyes were still fastened on the girl's head and mitre.

“Marie-Jea——” she began, but broke off abruptly because of the consternation she felt when she suddenly saw his hands. They were unusual—long like hands in pictures she had seen, Church pictures. They were pale yellow, no—red.

“Marie,” he repeated. She nodded absent-mindedly, for she was still staring at his hands; the palms themselves had deep cuts, from which the blood flowed onto the fingers. From there her glance went to his face and again, with stronger horror, she noticed how the blood was running down his forehead from the roots of his hair. Finally—She saw that the rock was coloured red, from his bleeding feet.

“What's your name?” she whispered.

“My name is——”

The eyes that looked up at her darkened, cleared again, but remained expressionless except for the look of pain in them, the pain of a suffering animal who understands nothing but its pain. Suddenly a wave washed up so high that he was drenched and her face shone wet with the spray. Slowly it receded, leaving flakes of scum, torn asunder by the wind, and steaming green surf in the cracks between the stones. His feet had been washed clean from blood, but his eyes beneath his wounded forehead had darkened again, and his lips had grown grey, his wounds smarting from the salt in the water. He sank back with nerveless, useless arms. But Marie-Jeanne's glance moved quickly from the stranger's face to the sea, at which she gazed with hatred and

horror. The next wave would break still higher, for the tide had already turned.

Her outstretched arms moved quickly forward, and she pushed her hands in under his armpits. Supporting her sabots firmly against the rocks, she walked backwards, dragging him with her. He felt that he was being cared for, so once more he collected all his strength to help; that moment the next wave caught them and broke roughly over his feet, and he fainted again from the smart of the salt water in his wounds.

The young girl exerted all her strength and dragged him as far as she could. Suddenly she remembered Caroline, and was amazed that she had not thought of calling her sister before.

The long waves reached farther and farther up the beach as the weight of the water increased behind them, and their booming grew louder and more menacing. She wanted to pause and shout, but her agitation and the danger they were in left her no time. She dragged the light, slender body, which was to her so heavy, over the irregular ground, up the rocky beach, over loose blocks from which the sea had chafed away the softer minerals, leaving the harder ones as spikes or knife-like edges.

He, knowing that someone was helping him, had a comfortable feeling of something smooth and soft and black against which his head could rest. His body was torn and lacerated, and his hands and feet were again and again caught in tenacious, slippery strips of seaweed, only to be pulled loose again as he was dragged on farther, only to encounter again the merciless rocks against which he had been fighting as if for an eternity, while the sea had helped to beat and scourge him. An eternity, his whole life. He remembered nothing but sea and rocks. All that had happened before was wrapped in an obscurity which had become a sort of night, night everywhere, on the sea and in his brain. The past had become a deep dark spot in a brain that was otherwise quite clear.

Marie-Jeanne dragged and pulled and wept with great dry sobs because she could not make her aching throat shout for the help she so badly needed. All her strength was concentrated on him alone, this human being, this man whom she had found. She was fighting for him, fighting against the sea, their common enemy. Now she had reached the huge, sarcophagus-like rocks, the top of

which were visible even at high tide, but there was a lower piece of ground between them and the upper beach, and at any moment they might be surrounded. Suddenly it seemed strange to her that there were so few people about. Generally there were many more on the beach at low tide. Most of them were probably in the South Bay, where there was a better stretch of sand. The three of them were quite alone here, and she could not see even as much as a flat-bottomed seaweed-boat in the bay. The sea would take her, and the one she had found, and perhaps Caroline too, just as it had taken their father, and some of their brothers, and most of the men among their relations. She had neither the time nor the strength to lift her head and look about her, but it seemed to her that the sea out there round the reefs was roaring worse than ever. The noise of the breakers often created a presentiment of future misfortunes. Sweat and tears mingled together on the girl's brown face.

"Holy Mary, Mother of God!" she prayed. "O St. Teresa! O St. Joseph, foster-father of Our Lord, pray for us!"

She had reached the lower piece of ground and the water in the pools penetrated her socks, chilling her hot feet, for, walking backwards as she was, she could not see where to tread. Suddenly she noticed that she had lost a sabot, and in the same moment she saw it, with its long, turned-up toe, sailing like a boat quite far away. She immediately realised the magnitude of her loss, for sabots were expensive, but she forgot it again in her anxiety for the man she was trying so desperately to save.

"Dear St Anne," she mumbled, "St. Anne, Mother of our Blessed Lady, have mercy on us."

At that moment she felt calmer. She stopped to regain her breath, still keeping her hands under his armpits, and supporting the dark head. She realised that she was over the worst. The low ebb-land, where she had found the man, was now entirely under water, but she had reached the inner rocky area and had gained time.

He freed his face from the soft, black velvet of her skirt and opened his eyes and looked up. There it was again, the broad, brown face—and above it the white spire.

"Mary," he said. "Is your name Mary?"

She looked down and smiled. She did not realise at once that

she was smiling with joy and thankfulness that he was still alive.

"Marie-Jeanne Garrec," she said. "That is my name. I am the daughter of Marie Le Donche and François Garrec. But poor papa is dead, and my brothers also. Where do you come from? You are not a Breton?"

The first part of this speech was said in a simple and matter-of-fact voice, the latter part shyly and hesitantly. She sank down on to the edge of the rock so as to rest for a moment, still supporting him. She realised now that his gaze had travelled past her.

Looking over the girl's shoulder, he saw solid earth. A real beach, a cobblestone wall, green grass and houses in the distance. Many white gables and broad chimneys, shining white.

And then he saw another person, standing higher up behind his rescuer. He saw a pair of short, almost round wooden shoes, bare brown legs, a red, flowery apron, with a clean red shawl crossed tightly across a childish bosom. A round, glowing face and black eyes, and loose hair blown about in the wind. His eyes returned to his rescuer. It was she who was wearing the spire, the crown, and who had the flower-like hands and the smooth, warm, black bodice.

"But, Marie-Jeanne, what have you got there? Has there been an accident?"

Caroline was surprised and full of wonder, but had already guessed something of what had happened. She jumped down from the rocky ledge, but stood there just as her sister had done, without daring to touch the stranger.

"The sea has brought him here," said the older girl, "and I am taking care of him because I was out there and saw him first. But you must help me carry him up the beach."

Marie-Jeanne grasped the man under his armpits again, and Caroline lifted his knees. The lanky, boyish body hung limply between them.

They laid him with tender care close to the stone wall above the edge of the beach. The older girl sat down on the ground and lifted his head into her lap. With the authority of ownership, she said to her sister:

"Hurry home and tell Uncle Guillaume that I have someone here whom I received out there. Say that he must decide where

I am to take him. Hurry! And tell Maman what has happened and that I am waiting here."

The clatter of Caroline's sabots grew fainter as she hurried along the path, and then sounded for a moment on the paved road which led to the village. The rescued man lay quietly with half-closed eyes, but his childishly gentle mouth was taut with pain. He felt a paralysing weight on his legs as if one of those great blocks of stone out there had been laid across them. But the soft black of her clothes gave relief to his neck and shoulders. The noise of the boiling surf and the strong beat of the waves on the rising tide sounded continually in his tired ears and contributed to the deep lines of strain on his face, but the noise seemed now to be far away, so that he dared to relax a little and feel assured that this girl would keep a safe watch over him—she whose hands were waving gently over his face as if to cool it or keep the flies away.

Marie-Jeanne heard the loud tramping of many feet, and saw the lines on the man's face deepen. 'How thoughtless they are,' she thought. 'They ought to have taken off their sabots.' It had never struck her before that sabots were so coarse and noisy.

Suddenly he heard all around him the voices of people he was too weak to see. It reminded him of the hollow rumbling of the sea in the chasms of the rocks. It was difficult to distinguish words in this obscure language—and yet he understood it. The rhythm seemed familiar. It struck him as miraculous that he understood it, that he knew what they were talking about. He was lifted up, placed on something and carried away.

CHAPTER TWO

THE VOICES AROUND HIM ROSE AND FELL like the waves of the sea. Shadows of human beings came between the bed on which he lay and the light from a window somewhere near. They pressed up against the edge of the bed and he saw red and blue clothes and recognised a strong smell of fish and other things from sea and shore. He saw a pair of scratched, hairy hands with black finger-nails touching the mattress itself, but so broad was the bed

on which he lay under a mountain of feather quilts that they would have been too far away to touch even if he had had the strength to stretch out an arm. Those puffed-out feather quilts weighed so heavily on him that he began to imagine black seas and masses of stones closing in over him again. Then he opened his eyes and saw that the thing pressing and weighing him down was white. White as the foaming surf—and his eyes grew dark with terror until a wall covered with calendars and picture post-cards and a mantelshelf full of cases and shells, confirmation photographs, wedding invitations and images of saints came within the focus of his eyes and relieved and quietened him.

Who was he? Where had he come from? Where was his home? What was his name?

Again and again they asked him these definite questions in French, and by degrees the words began to mean something definite to him. But he answered as before, merely by shaking his head. He tried to think, but the only thing he could remember was a stormy sea, breakers on reefs, under-water currents that sucked and dragged, and finally great waves—all wrapped in the gloom of night and linked with the impenetrable darkness he felt in his own brain when he tried to think back in time.

People came to his bedside, looked at him and went away, leaving room for others. There was *Monsieur le gendarme*, whose cheeks swelled as grandly as did his breast within its uniform coat. There were men in red blouses, others in blue, and in high-necked seamen's pullovers. All of them looked at him with awkward, shy or suspicious eyes while their brown, wrinkled hands fumbled nervously and uncertainly with the edge of their trouser pockets. Women came. They came again and again. Women in black, women wrapped in thick shawls pulled hard across their chests, women with broad, protruding bosoms and with sternly critical eyes, which made him tremble.

A person with a carefully trimmed, full beard and penetrating eyes leant over him and spoke to him tentatively in several different languages. Then he turned to the man in uniform. The latter emptied his glass with the clear brown liquid, smacked his lips, licked them and said suspiciously:

"He speaks French and understands Breton and listens to German and English as if he recognised them. How can a person

keep all that in his head and at the same time lose his memory? Does it make sense, Doctor?"

Doctor Guilcher stroked his beard and smiled, and his grey-blue eyes turned once more to the boy with the thin, pale yellow-tinged face with its big aquiline nose. He said "No, thank you" to the rum offered him by the head of the house, and, turning to the gendarme, who never refused anything, replied:

"One can never be certain in these cases. The war has given us a great deal of experience, but at the same time the greater the number of cases the greater the possibilities, one might almost say—the greater the confusion. Anyhow," the doctor pointed to the bed, "a poor, harmless boy without so much as a medal round his neck to protect him. We must first of all calm him down, and then see about getting his wounds healed up. Monsieur Garrec has promised to keep him here and will be responsible for him, and see that he does not slink away before the authorities have decided what to do with him. As to his loss of memory, a case like this cannot always be explained medically. Just at the moment this side of the question is the least important. We must get his body healed first of all. He is my patient, and the case interests me."

Marie-Jeanne's hands were never still. There was nothing great or dramatic in her gestures, but when she sat with her work at his bedside the little crochet-hook went in and out more swiftly than ever.

He was with her relations, in Uncle Guillaume's and Aunt Marie-Suzette's house. At home in her own mother's house there were three women to one room, and although many more people lived under Uncle Guillaume's roof, in fact several families, they had better facilities for taking in a stranger in a house where there were several other men. The busy days of spring had begun. Many of the men were at sea, and those who were left were working on the land with the women. Marie-Jeanne was not, of course, strong enough to help with the farming, and she therefore came every day and sat beside the sick, feverish man. It was a wet time of year, and when it rained she could hardly see out of the window because of the dampness on the panes, but the weather was changeable as usual, and the sun shone fitfully between the wind-driven clouds.

Now and then big, dark things like whales pushed past the rain-drenched window-pane. They were the seaweed lorries, and they darkened the room for a moment as they passed. They were loaded as high as the roofs and their weight shook the houses and even the whole street when the brake was applied as they swung round the corner. Marie-Jeanne's thoughts followed them absent-mindedly on their way towards the villages farther inland, where there were larger fields and real farmers. One of the sons-in-law living in the house, Buanic, the lorry-driver, carried seaweed, and was so booked up with orders that he had not even time to drive manure home to his own father-in-law's potato- and corn-fields. But Guillaume had for many years been in the habit of working for his neighbour in exchange for the latter's horse.

Marie-Jeanne liked her Uncle Guillaume, and her heart grew warm when she thought of him. He was so friendly and was more of a wag than people gave him credit for. He was one of the shrewdest of them all when he stood leaning against the lee wall, chatting with the other men. It was only at home that he became so gentle and good-natured that he seemed almost stupid.

There he was, as a matter of fact. The window-pane had cleared now so that she could see more clearly than before—there he was with his load of seaweed drawn by the untidy old grey gelding, his own hair and beard as grey as the horse, spitting at every tenth step, probably from shyness at his own importance in driving a horse and cart through the village, for to that he was not accustomed.

Marie-Jeanne went to the window and smiled at her uncle, who smiled back, and she met the look of mildness and melancholy flowing out, as it were, from his black eyes. Some thought that fisherman-farmer Garrec's 'swimming' eyes were due to the large quantities of red wine that he drank—the strong Algerian wine—and his many nips of rum, but his little niece thought that it was chiefly his mildness of heart and his kind soul that made his eyes overflow. He sorrowed for all his beloved dead, his brothers and sons and sons-in-law. Of his sixteen children there were only five still living, all girls. He had no sons left. Most of them had been drowned.

Marie-Jeanne's devotion to her uncle was partly connected with the fact that he also was crippled as she was herself. It was not,

of course, congenital, but he had a stiff leg due to an accident at sea. She now saw him from behind, for he had passed the window, walking beside the dripping load of seaweed, the fringes of which hung down low enough to sweep the street. He was narrow in the shoulders, in his short, simple, but well-fitting jacket which, like all well-worn and much-washed everyday clothes, had faded and was now a light red colour. Patches of the original clear red decorated the elbows.

He spat again more strongly and energetically than before, this time from emotion at the sight of Marie-Jeanne's friendly smile behind the window-pane. Also because he began to think of the foreign boy in there in his own bedroom, lying in one of the broad family beds. He thought that perhaps it was Our Lady of Joy, the Holy Virgin herself, who had sent this quiet, good-looking young man to his house and to the Garrec family to be a comfort in sorrow and a compensation for all that the sea and the war had taken from them. Guillaume spat more vigorously than ever, for a man always feels awkward when a woman looks at him, even if it is only his poor humpbacked little niece. Perhaps it was the good St. Anne who had sent her and no one else to rescue the unfortunate boy from the sea. The unknown boy in there had brought with him so much that was unusual. If his wife, Marie-Suzette, agreed with him, he would like to keep the boy, as long as things were cleared with the police and the other authorities, who nowadays mixed themselves up in a man's life from the cradle to the grave. The police had sent out what was called a 'description' of him and spoke about their lists of people who had disappeared and who were wanted.

"I will go and talk to the Mayor," said Guillaume aloud to himself, and fixed the promise with a new squirt of saliva. 'That is to say,' he added in his thought, 'if Marie-Suzette has nothing against it.'

It was afternoon, and people broke off their work for the four o'clock meal. Guillaume-Marie Garrec sat in his place at the round family table. All the daughters who lived at home were there and also Marie-Louise, who generally ran her own house. She was thirty, a woman in the prime of life. As usual, she took charge of the youngest in the family circle, the little Odile. The

child's mother, the twenty-three-year-old Rose, the wife of a sailor, gazed at herself in the mirror, looked after her own clothes and wrote her letters. When the shop bell tinkled she would rise, toss the long, broad bands of her coif over her shoulder and, dreaming and absent-minded, but a coquette in every movement, go into the shop, weigh out butter and sugar and hand bottles across the counter, without ever really waking up.

Marie-Pierre Buanic, with her two girls of school age, sat farthest in, right under the stairs leading to the attic. Whenever she moved all the baskets and fishing tackle hanging on the undersides of the stairs brushed against the black band and the comb arrangement which she wore on the top of her head, in her already greying hair. She had come straight in from the fields and had no mitre on her head owing to the uncertain weather. Marie-Louise also had been helping with the farm-work, and only wore the low under-hat of her coif. Her husband, Marcel Le Lay, was out fishing for mackerel. Yves Buanic was on the roads with his new lorry, which he was running in. Marie-Louise had married before her elder sister, and she and Marcel had built on to the west wing of the family house. Marie-Pierre thought that by rights this part of the house should have come to her, the eldest daughter, but at that time everyone—even she herself—had taken it for granted that she would never marry, otherwise she would have staked her claim to that part of the house. Now her sister lived there, looked after her children and worried about her husband when he was at sea. She did not, therefore, get much enjoyment out of being a fisherman's wife and owning her own house.

On the east side of the house Madame Garrec had built on the shop, so that every possible building space had been taken. Nothing more could be done to enlarge the old family house, the site was not big enough, for even the back of the house had been utilised: the cow-shed was there and the sheds for the hens and rabbits, and space was also needed for the winter stocks of hay and wood. A narrow piece of ground ran along the wall that faced the street, in which all the windows were situated. There was only just enough room for the laundry tables with the washing-tubs, leaving a little bit of grass on which to put out the clothes that were lying in soak. When Le Lay came home with his fishing tackle he also needed somewhere to put it out to dry and

sort it through. 'As for me,' thought Marie-Pierre, who, like most of the Kervily women, did not depend over-much on her husband where business was concerned, 'I shall have to find a place where I can build quite separately from my mother's house. We shall have to get hold of the money ourselves—Yves and I.'

At present she had one room above the shop for her husband and children. It was a large, comfortable bedroom, but nothing more, otherwise she and her family shared everything with her parents. It was the same with Rose, who did very well out of the arrangement as long as her Corentin was in the navy and stationed in Africa. The second daughter, Blanche-Marie, had moved away from the home and lived on the outskirts of the village, where her husband, the carpenter, Gérard Kér-laérec, had his workshop. Marie-Pierre, who was almost fifty, shuddered to think that she might have to live so far away from her mother's house. She did not want to move out of the old part of Kervily, ever! Better content herself a little longer with the bedroom above the shop.

Marie-Pierre Buanic woke with a start from her gloomy and sentimental broodings when her two little girls slid down from their chairs and crawled through under the table, out into the kitchen. They began looking for their sabots among the collection by the door. She saw them, each with a piece of bread in her hand, run off in their long, dark trousers, laced round the ankles. 'How long their legs look in those new-fashioned trousers,' thought their mother. 'Long, black, boyish trouser legs, and a little bit of skirt almost up to their armpits.'

Guillaume was the only man at the table, and he had his fixed place just as surely as he had his spittoon on the floor beside him. He had a specially large table-napkin, which was soaped and laid on the grass every other day, blown dry by the wind and ironed until it shone. He had his own tumbler and his own jack-knife, which he shut up and kept in his pocket so as to have it handy wherever he went. At table he was the master and Marie-Suzette, his wife, nothing but the woman who handed out the food, and when she was not doing that, she stood at the stove tearing at a piece of bread with the only tooth she had left in her head.

Guillaume explained that he had collected all the seaweed he needed and brought it back, and that now it only remained to

turn the soil. To-morrow he would himself take the spade and dig with his daughters. He said:

"Hélias's young son-in-law suggested ploughing the field for us, but I said: 'Never! Never will I have horse and plough on my soil. It must be thoroughly dug by hand as I have always done and my father-in-law before me.'"

As soon as Guillaume had said this and had seen his wife nod her head in agreement, he grew bold enough to start the subject that he had been turning over in his mind earlier in the day. "I have been thinking that this afternoon I will go to Tréoultré and speak to the Mayor," he said, looking round him importantly and glancing in a secret sort of way towards the bedroom door, behind which the stranger lay.

The coffee and food had cheered them up, all the more so because many neighbours had dropped in, and were all, of course, offered 'something strong'. They came in either straight from the street or through the shop, and stood about in the kitchen with necks craned towards the bedroom door. Then sabots would be discarded, and a step or two taken on the brightly-polished floor—soon the bed would be reached and they would all crowd round to see how the guest was getting on. Large and heavy in her worn, spotty, everyday velvet, the mistress of the house stood farthest back by the kitchen door, still tugging at the piece of tough bread. Her hair was dragged upwards from her neck over the flat back of her head, and was wet and shining in front along the parting. Marie-Suzette's body was becoming heavier and heavier, especially now that there was plenty of butter again—not like during the Occupation, when butter was so scarce; she realised it herself, and knew that she had a fatty heart—the doctor had warned her. Her legs hung in folds over the edge of her shoes, and her feet and hips ached and she found it difficult to hold the short, narrow crochet-hook. Things were not easy. She was growing old.

Someone moved so that the mistress of the house could see the bed. She looked at the thin, pale yellow cheeks, the big nose and the bandaged forehead with the long, wavy hair, and sentiment gripped her. Had she not herself given birth to sixteen children? Eleven of them had died in one way or another. Childish ailments had taken some, then came the mines in the fishing-nets and on

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the beaches, even on the keel of the boat itself. For there was war and evil enough even without the sea itself, which always lay in wait for its prey.

And now here was a foreign boy lying in their bed. He lay there so young, and at the same time so old. He was not like the folk round here. He awoke memories. When she was really young—she was married, of course, and the mother of a couple of children, for she had taken Garrec when she was only sixteen—when she was young she had taken a journey to the South of France. Martigues, that was the name of the place. At that time she was working in the sardine factory, the oldest canning factory in the parish, built by one of the famous companies from Nantes, and in that particular year some of the girls had been sent South to deal with an extra large supply of fish in the factories down there.

Somehow this boy reminded her of the men down there in the South. They were lithe and slim with narrow faces and big noses. They were, of course, mostly good-for-nothing, spoilt and coddled by their mothers and wives. Very different from Guillaume and the men here, thought Marie-Suzette, resolutely squeezing her piece of bread against her mouth. Guillaume was stretching his head farther and farther over the bed, and his expression became kinder and kinder. The wife's eyes grew almost as kind. Then an idle thought passed through her mind: 'I wonder if such a childish gentleman is accustomed to being looked after and waited upon as if he were a prince.' She sighed deeply. Then the sick man opened his eyes, turned his head and looked questioningly round the room.

"Marie!" he said.

All eyes were fixed on him. To whom was he speaking? Who was he calling? There were many Mariés here: almost every woman in the district was called Marie, and even men bore the name. But the late François Garrec's eldest daughter rose, as if it must be her he was calling, and all the other Mariés drew to one side and made way for her.

The eyes of the sick man moved searchingly from Marie-Jeanne to the rest of the people in the room, at any rate to those of them that he could see. The many dark, gloomy women of his feverish dreams were there. A second glance told him that they were all

standing with their hands lifted up, working swiftly and without a pause. They stood there with stern, silent mouths and hard, appraising eyes, crocheting, crocheting. It was as if they were creating an invisible web, as if unknown future destinies were being created by their hands.

He saw also a man with grey moustaches and bristles on his wrinkled, weather-beaten cheeks. The young man in the bed thought that he had seen this snub-nosed, gentle face, radiating so much good-will, before. He also remembered the light red coat and trousers with patches of a darker red at the knee and elbow.

There was movement at the door as the women turned round, and, still crocheting, glided silently on their soft felt socks out of the room, their necks and shoulders as stiff as ever. Then more noise as each one found her sabots and stumped across the coarsely cemented kitchen floor out into the street. Then Guillaume went close up to the bed. He cleared his throat and said:

"Monsieur, if my wife has no objection, I will go and consult with the Mayor."

The stranger turned his eyes towards Guillaume, but his gaze was so blank that the old Breton felt unsure of himself. His niece asked:

"What about, Uncle?"

"About, about—what shall I say . . ." The old man blundered along helplessly. Then his wife appeared at the door.

"I have heard you say that before, Guillaume-Marie. If there is really any need for you to go to the Town Hall, go first to someone who knows more about the business than you do yourself. Don't go direct to the Mayor, go to his secretary, the chap who does all the writing. Ask him what you better do. That gendarme comes snooping round here every day. He comes so often that it looks almost as if it's the drink he's after. He always stands there, staring at my expensive brandy instead of at the glass of rum I offer him. Then there are all those other officials who come—ask the secretary to write out something on a card that you can show to the gendarme and the 'authorities'."

Guillaume went to the cupboard to fetch his blue Sunday jacket. He had already a definite 'I'm going' look on his face. The man in the bed felt certain that now they were going to act, but he was afraid of their decisions. He looked for Marie-Jeanne, and

their eyes met. 'I'm not afraid of her,' he thought. 'I can safely do anything she thinks best.' He longed to stay as he was, on the border-line between existence and non-existence. Not that he felt calm with things as they were, but the bed in this room, with so many coming and going, was a sort of life-buoy to which he could cling while he floated round like the nameless cockle-shell he was. At the same time he was afraid of it, of its breadth, of the long way down to the floor, and of the suffocating quilts. He was also afraid of himself, the most unknown thing of all in the midst of all this strangeness. For already he knew more about each one of those who came and went than he knew about himself. About himself he knew only that he was this body feebly outlined under the blankets; these narrow, bony fingers, these powerless hands, which were still unhealed. Meanwhile Guillaume Garrec buttoned up his coat and set out along the road to Tréoultré for his talk with the authorities.

At home in the big, half-dark kitchen Marie-Suzette, standing by the stove, was making the evening soup, from which rose an appetising smell. Now and again the shop bell tinkled, and she put aside the ladle and panted out into the shop. Half annoyed at the interruption, she would squeeze herself in between the counter and the shelves to serve the customer. A jar of tomato purée, a bag of salt, a carton of fruit pulp or a plate of the butter which, like a golden mountain, rose among the knitted wear and the rolls of material which no one ever had time to remove from the counter. Or perhaps it was a glass of Quinquina or red wine with 'something strong in it' from the end where the wines and spirits were kept.

It could not be denied that there had been many more customers than usual since Marie-Jeanne had brought her stranger here to the family house. The Garrec family did not, of course, want the shop to take up too much of their time—they wished to be free to keep open or shut as it suited them; but it was a little provoking to see people going into their rival's shop across the road, and that had been happening a little too often lately—before *he* came. The rival was that well-to-do baker, Monsieur Jegou, his rich and miserly mother and his sister, the pious Amélie. Now the Jegous felt themselves left out and neglected, in spite of

the fact that they dealt in bread, the most indispensable of all things. Even these days, when the spring sowing kept people out in the fields and Marie-Suzette had thought that she would be left in peace with her cooking, the shop-bell tinkled again and again. 'If I had only known,' thought the old woman, 'I should have asked Rose to stay at home with me.' She sighed and sweated and did not know whether she ought to feel bothered or satisfied, but every time she had to give change for a large note and then add it to the thick bundle in her note-case, it was with a feeling of satisfaction that she put the rubber band round the worn-out leather pocket-book and replaced it under her bodice. Her large, yellow, tusk-like tooth bit grimly and resolutely into her under-lip. She grumbled, of course, about the visits from the police-sergeant and other authorities, and all the free drinks she was obliged to give them, but it really seemed as if their luck had turned since the foreigner from the sea had come to their house. Had not Marcel Le Lay come home with better catches than any of the other Kervily fishermen? In one week he had caught more than all of them put together. And was it not extraordinary that the Insurance Company had paid out the sum that Marie-Pierre had been expecting for so long, ever since Buanic had had that accident with the old car? Then there was the shop! No—it was no ordinary guest they had received into their house, and she hoped that Guillaume would be able to arrange for the boy to stay on in the family.

The room was so silent that the tiny click made by Marie-Jeanne's crochet-hook as she knotted her thread could be heard. It was growing dark, and the tramp of wooden shoes and the noise of wheels were heard from outside. The smell of seaweed strong with iodine and saturated with salt interlaced with the smell of the newly-turned soil came into the room, where it blended with the smell of spiced soup and boiled leeks. It was all quite unreal to the man in the bed.

The girl saw that he lay gazing at his hands, looking at them, stroking them. They were thin with blue veins and long fingers—how well she had managed to study them in spite of her shyness. And still even now she found something new to notice: the space between the thumb and the first finger was unusually broad, but

it did not disfigure the hands, made them, in fact, appear particularly useful. Most of the other hands she had seen were short and broad. These were different. They were not the kind of hands that should become scarred and covered with tar in a boat or become black and warty from digging. But they had been scarred, they still bore traces of the scars—mostly on the palms. His forehead also had an ugly wound on one side of it, where the skin had been scraped and something sharp had penetrated.

He lifted one of his hands to his bandaged forehead as if they had both been thinking the same thing. 'I am nothing but these hands,' he thought as before, 'and this forehead, this brain with its patches of deadness. No man, no past. And what about the future? The future depends entirely on this tired, wondering head, these hands——'

'They have been scarred,' thought Marie-Jeanne. 'Wounded and bloodstained. And the head and the roots of the hair. And the feet—they too have been injured?'

Unexpectedly he stretched out his arms as if to measure the width of the bed and remained lying like that with half-closed eyes and nerveless, open hands. One of them lay near her where she sat near the edge of the bed. She started. Why was he lying like that? When she saw him in this position her gaze involuntarily passed on to the little crucifix hanging above the bed. It had been propped up between the wall and a picture showing two figures in a field saying the Angelus. The lower part of the crucifix had been broken at some time when the room had been cleaned, and then it had been stuck in behind the picture so that only the outstretched arm and the tortured, forward-bending head were visible.

When he opened his eyes, she asked him tensely:

"Why did you come to us?"

He smiled, half sadly, half ironically. "To meet you," he said, and she blushed. He looked at her carefully: her hair, her shoulders, her hands—but after that his eyes turned away from her and his expression showed weariness and indifference. He no longer looked in her direction, and she felt as if he were thousands and thousands of miles away from her. Then her mouth formed sentences, and she spoke them without knowing why:

"You came because we needed you. You were sent to us. And I—I was sent to receive you."

He smiled again and looked at her, tired as before, but indulgently amused. "You found me, Marie, Marie——?"

"Marie-Jeanne," she reminded him.

"Marie-Jeanne Garrec," he continued, half to himself, speaking up towards the roof. "A daughter of the late François Garrec and Marie Le Donche. Nineteen years old. Born with a hump. Lost all her brothers—one of them, Joseph, who was always gay, was involved in the Resistance Movement. He heard the General's appeal and answered his call. One day he came and said: 'I kiss you good-bye, my mother, my sisters, for I am called to England. I do not know when I'm going, nor how—but I shall return to you when we have won our freedom.' He returned all too soon—as a prisoner of the Army of Occupation. And one morning he was shot over there among the sand-dunes and was buried in the sand with many others. Later he was moved and was given an honourable funeral so that he now lies in his family grave."

The girl's amazement grew. He spoke as before in a half-indifferent, half-amused, tone of voice and yet with a certain solemnity.

"How do you know all this about us?" she whispered.

He shook his head. "How *do* I know it?" he asked himself.

Once again he repeated to himself, wondering still more:

"How do I know it?" Was it that he had subconsciously heard them talking next door in the kitchen? Or did he just simply know it?—know it because he was not like other men who came and went; because he had experienced things that nobody else had experienced? He was afraid for himself, afraid of the mystery of the unknown in which he was suspended. A life containing so much that could not be explained seemed to be more impressive than other lives. It was as if he had been consecrated to something.

He frowned uneasily. Marie-Jeanne, sitting there so watchful and silent, noticed his expression of suffering. His restlessness and misery were increased by the fact that he felt so stiff and weak—and he seemed to grow stiffer still when he looked at the stiff, gilded arms on the cross. Then he became conscious of the fact that his own arms were stretched out in the same way.

"Why am I lying like this?" he asked himself. "How long have I been lying like this?"

He tried to move his benumbed limbs but felt suddenly powerless to do anything but turn his hands. In his half-conscious state his face went slowly white, and Marie-Jeanne rose, and disturbed, bent over the bed. A thought, that immediately turned into a perception of something real, something he had personally experienced, passed through his mind: the thought of the Crucifixion; the thought of the nails through the hands; of being laid down flat; of being stretched out, of heavy blows.

Marie-Jeanne moved first one arm and then the other, and laid them gently down alongside his body. Then, with her half-hopping, half-gliding gait, she went out into the kitchen to receive Sister Ruth. She had noticed that the nursing sister had passed the window and had leant her bicycle against the wall outside the kitchen door and was now coming in to give him his medicine and dress his wounds. That was a good thing. It was very important that he should be carefully nursed, like a flower, like a bird, like something that the world had never seen before.

The young girl watched from a distance every movement the nun made so that she might learn anything that might be useful to her later on. All the world knew that this particular nursing sister seemed to have been specially born to serve Kervily and the other villages in the Parish of Tréoultré. Cluttered up as she was with her full skirts, apron and other tiresome garments, neither wind nor rain, storm nor snow could keep her off the roads or stop her from visiting the cottages on her bicycle. When she had finished the treatment she turned to Marie-Suzette, who was, as always, present in the background, and told her that the doctor was coming once more to see the patient. "He is bringing the Mayor and his secretary with him," added Sister Ruth.

"And the sergeant too, of course," filled in Marie-Jeanne innocently, and her aunt gave her a reproachful look. This was just what she was about to say, but in a very different tone of voice.

"He'll be there sure enough!" she mumbled as she followed the nun to the door.

They came, all of them: the doctor, the chemist, the photographer, a couple of schoolmasters, and the parish officials. The round gendarme stood meekly and unobtrusively in the background. He was the only one in uniform, and therefore felt rather embarrassed. But his cheeks glowed and his eyes swam, for this was the end of his official tour round the parish, and most of the people were friendly and offered him a little something, and he could not bear to hurt their feelings by refusing, even if by the end he had had more than was good for him.

Guillaume Garrec stood at the head of the bed, and the sick man was able to catch a glimpse now and again of the blue Sunday jacket and the newly shaved, badly cut chin. Guillaume's kind eyes, so like those of a sorrowful dog, seemed to give him strength, for he felt uncertain of himself and confused, especially with the doctor so trim and neat with his well-cut beard and his smooth white hands.

Now and again he sank into an almost pleasant, feverish condition, weak as he was and excited by being the object of interest to so many, and raised up between the pillows and photographed.

The doctor stood there with his thumb stuck into the arm-hole of his waistcoat and watched his patient with a benevolent expression on his face. The patient, looking upwards from below the slight rounding of the doctor's stomach, saw the fine hairs in his nostrils, the underside of the eyelashes and a large, brown birthmark under the jaw-bone, half hidden by the beard.

"And now," said Dr. Guilcher briskly, smiling so widely that the gold stoppings in his teeth shone and glittered. "Now our patient is over the worst, and there is nothing to hinder him from sitting up. Soon he will be able to get up and then go out. But—one can't go about with nothing but a patient's number as an identification. I understand that the Clerk to the Municipal Offices here has already been in contact with the Prefecture in Quimper and received his instructions. Our young man is to be given a name—a temporary name, of course—but he must have a name and an Identity Card. Home:—Kervily—Tréoultré, Finisterre, Outer Brittany. An emigrant from the sea—surely you do not come from the city of Ys itself. Tell me, does the beautiful,

but evil, Princess Danut continue her sinful life down there in our Breton Atlantic, throwing out her young friends as soon as she has finished with them? One never knows." The doctor raised his first finger and continued in a still more playful manner: "No, one never knows. Or was it the golden-haired siren, Ahès, who lured you? Well, well, but—joking apart—what shall we call you, what name shall I write in my book beside your number? As a matter of fact, it's not everyone who has the chance of choosing their own name. Well, what are you going to choose?"

It was a serious matter. The sick man realised this, and his eyes travelled warily from one to the other. The daughters of the house moved the larger of the two tables in the room close up to the bed. Guillaume himself brought the ink-bottle, shaking it to make sure there were a few drops left. He also bought a pen with a long, sharp nib, but the Clerk took his short, fat fountain-pen out of his pocket and pushed aside the old-fashioned writing material, so as to leave more room for his papers and his elbows. The police sergeant now made his way forward more boldly, for he felt he had the right, that it was in fact his duty, to take part in the proceedings at this stage.

"What shall we write?"

They asked him the question again, and the sick man became more and more uncertain and agitated the better he understood what was involved. He was to be given a name. A name. He was to become somebody, someone, but only temporarily. Behind it all the secret would remain

"What is your favourite name?"

Marie-Louise, who stood farthest back with little Odile in her arms, took down the calendar from the wall and passed it over everybody's head to her mother, who tried vainly to read the name of the saint for the day without her glasses. Instead she fluttered the pages and suggested:

"I think it would be best to give him the name of the Saint of whatever day it was you found him, Marie-Jeanne. Here, take the calendar yourself and look."

She handed the calendar to the girl, but before the latter was able to take it the Clerk had grabbed it, threw it aside, and said contemptuously:

"Take that thing away, there's no need to take the name of a saint."

"But one generally does—generally—and it is——"

Marie-Suzette broke off and buried her tooth in her lower lip. Of course—all those people at the Municipal Offices were ungodly. Thanks to the workers at the canning factory in Saint-Fiacre, a Red burgomaster had been elected with an equally Red staff, and none of them would have anything to do with Our Blessed Lord or His holy saints. But if she had been allowed to speak he should have been given the name of the saint of the day with the addition of Anne. She, Marie-Suzette, had a feeling that he ought to place himself under the particular protection of St. Anne. They ought also to have had a priest there. For when a person is given a name it should be connected with holy baptism. Who knew whether he had ever been baptised? But it was no good talking of these things in the presence of godless men. It was strange, however, that Dr. Guilcher did not wish it otherwise, for after all he was pious and respected the Sacraments. She heard the Mayor say:

"Is there no one who can put forward a suitable name?"

"I suggest," said the doctor, "that Marie-Jeanne shall be god-mother and that she shall decide what our protégé shall be called!"

"Marie-Jeanne! Yes, let her do it!"

They all looked round for the hump-backed girl, and so also did the man in the bed. She was standing right down by the kitchen door behind the backs of a great many who were taller than she was. Now the crowd parted so that her little figure could be seen. She blushed, and her eyes began to glow. She knew what they expected of her—what *he* expected of her—she must come up closer.

He lay waiting and felt more hopeful when she at last plucked up courage and came forward. In spite of her shyness and agitation, her brain was already considering the question she had been asked. It must be a good name—the best she could find. She liked François because that was the name of her dead father. Joseph was the most sorrowful name and spoke most clearly to the heart. Louis was short and good, but it was very ordinary. The same might be said about Pierre. Otherwise she might have

chosen that, for St. Pierre was the safest and most steadfast person, next to Our Blessed Lord Himself and the Holy Virgin. But everybody was called Pierre—even her cousin, the simple Marie-Pierre Buanic.

She had long known the name she liked best of all—she only wondered whether she dared to tell it. It came from the legends, from one of the legends that Marie-Jeanne had heard as a child and had retained in her memory because she had so much time in which to think about them. She had plenty of time while she sat at home crocheting day-in and day-out and during the evenings. Particularly those evenings when she heard music far away in the village and knew that girls of her own age were dancing and enjoying themselves. Then in her thoughts she lived with her heroes and heroines. Therefore she knew at once the name she would like to give him. But she hesitated—was it the name of a real, proper saint or was it pure imagination? Perhaps the others would not agree with her.

"Efflam," she said, and blushed deeper than ever.

Surprise and disapproval were mirrored in the faces around her. The eyes of the sick man shone in surprise—but his forehead clouded as if he were disappointed that it was not something more dignified and high-sounding. Finally he looked only confused.

"What does Efflam mean?" he asked.

Sunshine and shadow chased each other across Marie-Jeanne's face. Finally the sun came out somewhat uncertainly, as if threatened by the clouds. She said:

"Efflam was a prince."

"Ah!" exclaimed the people in the background.

"Efflam," said Dr. Guilcher thoughtfully. "Efflam, yes, that's right, he was a prince. Prince of the Island Hibernia, that is to say, Ireland, married to an English princess, Enora. Is that not so, Marie-Jeanne? I have forgotten the story. Tell it to our—hm, hm, our young Monsieur Efflam and to us others too!"

The young man looked round him expectantly. Marie-Jeanne stretched herself, she grew and became the cynosure of every eye. The strong glow on her cheeks deepened and the shining light in her dark eyes made her look strange, almost unearthly.

"Efflam," burst from her, and no one could afterwards say

whether she whispered it or shouted it. "Efflam was a prince, and he was betrothed to Enora, the lovely English princess. He married her to please his father so that the latter should not be called a breaker of promises and so as to preserve the peace between the two countries. But his first love was to Our Lady, and he had sworn fealty to Her. Then he came to Armorica—as our Brittany was called in those days—and here he slew the great dragon with whom King Arthur and his knights had fought in vain."

Marie-Jeanne paused, and then continued shyly:

"Enora also came to Brittany and she found her husband, and they loved each other, but——"

"But——?" said Dr. Guilcher when the girl stopped, and the whole room was filled with a questioning silence. "But what, Mademoiselle, but what?"

"They both wished to remain true to the Heavenly Virgin and to their promises and therefore they lived together in a holy relationship in unconsummated marriage. They each had their own little cell and only met at the great festivals, when they shared a couch, the one lying beside the other without touching each other. They found great happiness in this sweet and holy alliance. Efflam was a prince who slew King Arthur's dragon, and he—and he—was chaste and beautiful and courageous."

The gendarme wiped his eyes, and the tears ran down Guillaume's furrowed cheeks silently and beautifully. The photographer blinked his eyelids, and the thin chemist blew his nose. He had only lately moved to Kervily so had not yet become acclimatised, so that he always had a cold at this time of year. It was the time of the spring storms, bringing with them the strongly iodinated seaweed. 'One can have too much of even a good thing,' as he used to say. Now he blew his nose more vigorously than ever, and not only his nose but his eyes were red. Marie-Suzette also had need to give her nose a good wipe, but she felt in vain in her pockets for a handkerchief. The doctor cleared his throat, and the Mayor, who was a simple fisherman from the village farthest to the north-west, stared persistently at his feet. In his position, he thought, he should know all the legends of this sort, but unfortunately he did not. Then there was the difficulty of the Clerk and the schoolmasters. He did not know what they would

think about such stories, and they were the dominating factor in his party. Would they consider it part of the foolish nonsense with which the Church lulled people to sleep, or would they class it as literature, something belonging to the folk-lore of the district? He stared down at his indifferently polished shoes and now and again glanced in the direction of the schoolmasters, but one of the two young men picked at his ear and looked entirely indifferent, not to say stupid. The other stared at the figure in the bed, whether from pure curiosity or ill-will, the Mayor could not decide.

Then he tried to get a clue from his Clerk, but the latter sat there with lowered eyes, drawing circles and again circles. The Mayor realised that the best thing for him to do was to continue to look at his shoes, and at the angles and stars with which their toecaps were ornamented.

Suddenly childish laughter was heard. Odile had managed to wriggle herself out of her aunt's arms on to the floor and had made her way through the crowd of grown-ups until she came to the bed. It was so high that she only reached half-way, and she therefore laughed and stamped her feet, impatient and peremptory.

Then Efflam—for they had already begun to think of him by that name—stretched out his long, thin hands and caught hold of the child, and with all his returning strength managed to lift her up. A sound of surprise and delight went through the room.

"He likes children!" they sighed, and others nodded sternly.

Marie-Jeanne lifted the child down and gave her to her mother, the absent-minded and indifferent Rose. Then, oblivious of all the people in the room, she tenderly and firmly took hold of first one and then the other of the outstretched arms and laid them along his body. While she was bending over him he opened his eyes and started back, terrified by the strange head-dress flicking so close above him as if the whole tower were just about to fall down on him. Then he recognised the face.

"Efflam," he said, half to himself, half to her, "Am I really Prince Efflam?"

She smiled and nodded, but at that moment both the doctor and the Clerk cleared their throats and the latter said in an irritated voice, as if he could no longer curb his impatience:

"What about the surname? Two names are necessary! So we have one more thing to settle."

The surname, the family name? But he had no family. A surname—yes, but what sort of surname? A Breton name perhaps—no, she noticed that they were becoming more impatient, so she must not let them wait any longer. But what name, what name?"

"Kelou!" she said without knowing why.

"Kelou" echoed round the room.

"Kelou," came Dr. Guilcher's own personal echo just a little after all the others.

The Clerk looked sternly at Marie-Jeanne, and she looked unhappy and repentant, but the doctor nodded consolingly.

"Kelou, yes, that isn't bad at all. An old Breton word which can well be used as a name. If I remember rightly it means something like 'approach' or 'fame' or 'tidings', or something like that. You others know better than I do. Not at all bad. Efflam Kelou, *messieurs, mesdames*. I take my leave and must ask your pardon for going so soon, but duty calls me."

"Efflam Kelou", wrote the secretary in his best handwriting. He took up a stiff block of paper, laid the forms he had just filled in on top of it, and handed them for signature to the newly-named man in the bed. Before he had had time to give him his thick fountain-pen with the shining gold bands, old Guillaume Garrec stepped forward to the bed and pushed the ancient, elegantly-shaped pen into his guest's hand. The young man hesitated for a moment, wondering, questioning, the pen sticking out from his blue-veined hand, which trembled slightly. Then he wrote his name, carefully following the order of the pencilled letters that the Clerk had already printed. He had an angular handwriting, forward-slanting, clear, but with some unexpected curves and turns, which might be due either to the sharp point of the old pen or the feebleness of his fingers, or even to the style he had been taught, no one knew where. When he had finished, his hands sank back and his head fell to one side, entirely exhausted.

"Efflam Kelou," said Marie-Jeanne softly as she leant over him, arranging the pillows while the others left the room. "Are you satisfied with Efflam Kelou? Do you like being called that?"

He had now had time to pull himself together, but his gaze was

fixed on the ceiling, and she waited in vain to meet those eyes of which she had always been a little afraid, but whose depths she was so anxious to penetrate. A smile trembled on his lips.

"Eflam Kelou," he said thoughtfully. "The prince approaches. Tidings, fame—born far beyond the borders, outside all reckoning of time, before the beginning of all things."

"Outside all reckoning of time, before the beginning of all things," she repeated slowly. "What can that mean? What can he mean by that?"

CHAPTER THREE

EFFLAM WAS NO LONGER FEVERISH, but the disturbing noise of the sea still kept him awake. It filled him with fear and trembling, but at the same time with a feeling of pleasure such as does a light fever or a slight intoxication.

'Eflam Kelou'—in his thoughts he said the name over and over again, this name which had not yet embodied his personality as does the right name, but was nevertheless the name of which he was conscious and to which he was forced to respond—'Eflam Kelou'—Kelou: approach, tidings, reputation—What tidings were they? What reputation would create murmuring voices and restlessness? Who was approaching? The night became long with darkness and the regular breathing of the sleeping ones and with the rhythm and angrily hollow murmur of the far-away water masses. 'Once I was out there myself. What was I doing there? How did I get there, from whence did I come and why?'

Was that anyone coming along the road? No, it was the sea again. Its groaning sounded like the tread of superhuman footsteps. Then it was somebody after all—somebody greater than the storm was stamping past.

Kelou—it was approaching again. It had come, it was near. He waited and feared and waited. He perspired and yet trembled with cold beneath his feather quilt. What was approaching? he asked himself in fear. Was it the sea or was it He who walked upon the sea?

If only Marie-Jeanne had been there. In her company he felt

calm. Or rather strong. He noticed the mystical powers more than ever when she was near, but he was stronger, more courageous.

Beautiful and chaste and courageous—he smiled in the darkness. Efflam was chaste and courageous. Efflam was a prince. He was married to Enora. Married to Enora . . . now he wrinkled his eyebrows at a troublesome thought: she made me Efflam, does she perhaps dream that she is Enora? Efflam and Enora. Efflam Kelou—

Kelou—what an ugly, strange, captivating language this was, this Breton. Old Celtic mixed with God knows what.

God knows what. He knew who he was. And why he was here. God knew the meaning of all this. "I have chosen you from the beginning of the world—from the beginning of the world. You are my chosen one—in whom I have great delight—"

He threw himself violently over on to one side, wet with perspiration. Whimpering and trembling under the burden of the thoughts that came to him he did not know from whence.

No, he did not know from whence. If only he knew. Nor why it was just this kind of thought—these great, terrifying words.

Did they come from out there? From Him who walked upon the water?

"O good Saint Anne, they have told me to turn to you, you, the great mother of the world. But I say: Father, Thy will be done, Thy will, not mine, Father, for you have chosen me . . .

"Come to me, Marie, come Marie-Jeanne," he whispered. His throat was dry and stiff. "I shall be ill again," he thought. "I shall go under, I who am a prince, I who am he that is to come." Now the rain rattled against the window-panes. Rain, rain, *glau*, *glau*—oh, this harsh Breton language, the words beat upon his brain like hammer blows. *Glau*, *glau*, always *glau*. It resembled the sad cry of a large strange bird.

This *glau*-language, which he did not know and yet understood. How was it that he understood it, who had taught him? He could not have come from these parts, for no one in the district knew him, and he was different from all the others. And then there were other languages he understood too. How many did he really understand? He sweated more than ever.

Could a person be born with a sort of universal knowledge? Could the power of knowing and understanding all things as soon

as he was brought into contact with them exist in a person? If such a thing were possible it was surely a miracle. A miracle like the one by which he was washed up on the shore of just this particular village and that a Marie with a 'Queen of Heaven' crown upon her head was there to receive him.

"Marie-Jeanne," he groaned again, for he was now too exhausted even to turn over, so lay as he was with his arms stretched up above his head. "Marie-Jeanne, why are you not here? I am drowning again, Marie-Jeanne, Marie, heavenly mother."

Suddenly he started—terrified. A huge, white shape stood between him and the rest of the grey world of dawn. It bent down over him. It was Marie-Suzette's great bosom swaying freely inside her loose, white nightdress.

"Are you feeling ill, Efflam?"

He was silent and lay quite still in the hopes that in this way he would get her to go away, for he suddenly feared that she would touch him.

"Are you thirsty, Efflam? Shall I get you a drink?"

"What's the matter?" Guillaume's hoarse, early morning voice came from the other bed, and Efflam breathed more easily. Marie-Suzette went out into the kitchen, and she answered him from there:

"He's not well, the poor man. He's not really strong yet, but Marie-Jeanne says that he's to be allowed up to-day."

Guillaume sat on the edge of the bed and cleared his throat of all that had collected there during the night. Then he went and opened the shutters. Afterwards he stepped to the side of his guest's bed.

"Good-day, Monsieur! Has the good St. Anne given you a quiet night? This is a great day for you. You're going to get up and have a look at Kervily. *Bon jour, bon jour!*"

Not far from the long Garrec house there was a short little street, blind alley, turning off to the right. This old, narrow street had in it only four low houses, and the least and the smallest was Marie-Jeanne's home. A cobblestone wall, a flower and an onion patch, a couple of rabbit hutches, a table on which stood a wash-tub, there was just enough room for all this on the strip of land

bordering the street. The front of the house was whitewashed and the corners serrated in clear blue to match the doors and windows, which were surrounded by the same clear, check pattern.

The door, which almost always stood open, led through the lobby, from which the attic stairs went up, into the family room. Two good and beautifully decorated beds, a big cupboard for clothes and a chest of drawers, together with a round table for meals in the middle of the room; a brightly polished stove and a narrow shelf along the wall for the coffee-bowls and plates; a low work-table under the window with bricks and small doubled-over pieces of felt to support and warm the feet; the wireless set covered over with light-blue flannel stood on its stool close to the table; a vase with dried everlasting flowers and shells and other relics of dead fish from southern waters; an exhibition picture of the Château d'Eau in Paris and another similar one of the approach to Rio de Janeiro; the postal and telegraph calendar for the year, with information about fairs and high and low tides; a mantelshelf with a long strip of embroidery along the edge and its statue of the Madonna, and a crucifix on the wall—this was the home to which Marie-Jeanne went when she left her protégé's sick-room. She had her own little work-table in the window, where she kept her boxes of thread and other accessories for her crocheting and needlework, and also a coloured statue of St. Theresa of Lisieux.

They sat at the round table, Marie-Jeanne, her mother and Caroline, eating their morning meal. Silently they dipped their bread into their bowls of coffee, while the cat, arching her back and lifting her tail, stroked herself against each of their legs in turn.

The sound of a siren faintly heard against the wind caught Caroline's attentive ear. Hastily she mopped up the last drops of coffee with the spongy white bread, threw aside her napkin, kissed her mother and sister, and the next moment was herself nothing but the sound of clogs dying away in the distance as she ran to the factory down by the harbour.

Marie-Jeanne looked closely at her mother, this little mother of hers with her grey face, high, broad cheek-bones and low forehead and the sad, grey eyes behind the simplest metal-frame glasses, over which quite unexpectedly she would look up amused. And

la coiffe, the old, original Kervily hat which she always wore, although most people nowadays chose the more sensational Pont l'Abbé mitre, the one that Marie-Jeanne herself wore.

The nineteen-year-old girl sat there with her well-arranged hair and gleaming white head-dress. Marie Le Donche looked at her daughter more closely: to-day she was finer than ever in her newest light velvet, with a violet-blue chiffon scarf and her black satin apron embroidered with small pearls and silk thread in the same violet-blue shade as her fichu. She had put on her best summer clothes, which were usually only worn when going to a *Pardon*. Why had she decked herself out like this to-day? Was it because that young man she found at low tide was to get up and go out? Was it for him that she had dressed herself up so pretty and grand? 'My poor little daughter,' thought the widow Marie Le Donche, and looked pityingly at her. Marie-Jeanne noticed her mother's kindly expression, and it gave her courage to break the silence. She said eagerly, colouring deeply:

"Maman, dear Maman! To-day—it's Efflam's day, but he—I should so much like to ask you one thing. Let me . . ."

She broke off, and as quickly as her lameness allowed her she was out in the hall and clambering up the steep attic stairs. Her mother cleared the table, rinsed out the bowls, dried the oilcloth, and felt more and more uneasy as she heard her daughter moving and dragging the boxes about up in the attic. Then she took up her thread and her crochet-needle and sat down, listening and attentive. At last she heard the girl's step on the stairs, and now she stood in the doorway, her cheeks redder than the strong red stuff she was carrying over her arm, a little unsure of herself, a little nervous but, above all, imploring.

"What's the matter now?" Marie Le Donche looked over her glasses, her eyes stern.

"Maman, dear Maman!"

"What's that?"

"It's—oh, my dear Maman—you know what it is. It's Joseph's new suit." She grew pale, for she saw that her mother was biting her lip, had lowered her eyes, and remained silent.

"Dear Maman—!" Her eyes were wet now and her voice confused. She still stood in the doorway with the suit over her arm, holding it out imploringly to her mother, whose glance was

still downcast, while her crochet-hook worked feverishly. Finally the elder woman broke the silence.

"That is the suit that was made for Joseph, just before he went away, from a piece of stuff that I had kept hidden for several years. He never had the chance to wear it. 'When I come back,' he said, 'when we celebrate victory and peace, then I'll put it on.' I remember it well, Joseph's newest suit."

"Yes, and now, Maman—they are just the same size, I am certain they are just the same size. I am sure of it, dear Maman, oh, Maman!"

"Take it!" said the older Marie hastily and without looking up.

The strong red material shone like fire when the girl lifted her arm. She sprang forward to the table and kissed her mother eagerly and gratefully.

"Off you go," said Marie Le Donche, stiffly drying her cheeks and the corners of her eyes with one finger. Touched and uneasy, she heard her daughter go.

When Marie-Jeanne arrived with the suit over her arm, Efflam was already out of bed, but he was not fully dressed. From the kitchen they could see him standing in the middle of the room, tall and lanky, with his thick, black hair curling attractively over his forehead. He was wearing one of the armless undervests of thick, firm, yellowish-white wool that the fishermen usually wore and which protected both their chests and backs from wind and cold. He had just pulled on a pair of newly-washed, crumpled trousers, which were so bleached that they were almost white in parts. They only reached half-way down his legs.

Marie-Jeanne stood there shyly without daring to say a word: he seemed quite unfamiliar to her, and something tore at her heart. Then those trousers helped her a little, for they reminded her of her brothers when they were in their teens and grew out of their trousers faster than they wore them out. She smiled, amused. At the same time she told herself that it was a good thing that she had come and that it was high time that she did so, for he must not go out into the village in those old, worn-out clothes, which were so much too small for him. Marie-Suzette pushed the young girl in front of herself over the threshold and said in a complaining voice:

"He's much taller than we thought. Yves' clothes don't fit

him. They're too wide. And Papa's are too small. The ones he's wearing belong to Marcel, but the trousers are absurdly short."

Marie-Jeanne lifted her arm with the new, stiff jacket and the newly pressed trousers and burst out, her eyes shining:

"Here's your suit, Efflam!" At that moment she noticed that the room was full of a strong perfume. His hair shone damply, that was where the smell came from—perhaps also from his skin, from his cheeks and chin. He saw her look and stroked his hair, and his hand became damp and greasy from the perfumed oil.

"The barber came early this morning and shaved him," said Marie-Suzette. "Monsieur Geoffry has given him everything he thought he needed to protect him against the weather, as he is not used to the air here. It always smells so good after he has been here, but now it's time that Efflam should begin to shave himself." She sighed and put her hand to her breast. Marie-Jeanne pulled herself together and announced for the second time:

"Here's your suit, Efflam!"

Hesitantly he took the two garments and, holding them up, gazed at them seriously.

"Brand-new without a single patch," he said.

"Joseph's newest suit," she admitted.

"Joseph," he repeated thoughtfully. Then he smiled that rather superior smile as if he were far above them all. It made them draw away from him, walking backwards as if from a person in a high position. He said:

"If the ladies will allow me and will excuse me for a moment, I will put on my new suit."

When they had shut the kitchen door and he had taken off the old blue trousers, he was overcome by weakness. Standing there in his cotton underpants, he looked longingly at the bed with its many cushions, feeling it to be his lifeboat, his haven. And yet—his face took on a bitter expression when he remembered the many waking hours he had spent there. It had also meant torture, this lifeboat. And there lay the new clothes, red as if they had been dipped in blood, Joseph's clothes, which were now his. He must put them on, he must go on farther, he—Efflam Kelou.

He pulled on the trousers, and they fitted both in length and width. Then came Guillaume's woollen shirt, which he buttoned

round his neck, but the sleeves of which he left undone because they were too short. Finally Joseph's coat, a short, unlined coat in a stiff cotton material which was worn when the working blouse was exchanged for a grander garment. It had no collar, but there was a narrow neckband which buttoned right up round the neck, so that there was something almost priestly about it. It fitted as if it had been made for him.

When he stood there in his new rustling costume, he had a feeling—as if he had been consecrated to some predestined vocation. He took a turn or two round the rooms, this room with the yellow ceiling-boards and the green walls and all its coarse but useful fittings, and all its knick-knacks to please the eye and edify the soul. He hesitated to leave it, as the prisoner hesitates to leave his cell. He had to move carefully so as not to slip. He pattered about in the thick woollen socks he had been given and looked at the shining, polished floor, the pride of the women. 'It shines like one of the panes cut out from a window of the Palace of Versailles itself,' he thought, and then suddenly pulled himself up. Versailles——! How did he know anything about Versailles? Had he been there? Who knew—yes, who knew? Again he was amazed at the knowledge he possessed.

He who knows all.

A feeling of great weakness came over him, and it grew black before his eyes. He caught hold of the end of the bed. From whence and why did those words come to him again in the middle of the morning? He who knows all. The chosen one. The beloved one. He who was before the beginning of time.

He laughed with pale, stiff lips and did not dare to leave go of the bed. Then the door was carefully opened, and Marie-Jeanne's anxious, questioning eyes appeared.

"You must help me, Marie-Jeanne," he managed to say with light self-irony. She came over to him in her natural, limping way—it was as if she were curtsying to him at every step—and she took his hand and led him out of the room as if he had been her brother. There were a pair of shining, new sabots ready for him to step into in the kitchen, and he received them with the same simplicity with which he had accepted all that had been given him.

Kervily lay before them with its stone-grey or whitewashed houses and broad gable-chimneys. While they were still in the old village with its low, tightly packed houses and small, newly dug fields, comfortably fenced off by their stone walls, Efflam felt himself safe. He noticed that the air was pure and full of a life-giving strength, so that to his surprise he was able to walk comfortably. He was a little shy of having Marie-Jeanne with him. He felt as if a nurse had taken charge of him, but at the same time he would have felt disappointed and frightened if she had left him alone.

They walked along by the stone wall, across some small fields, and then again between a low wall and houses. Then they suddenly found themselves outside the village. The path was so narrow that they were now forced to walk in single file, and Efflam went on in front in a sort of semi-coma. Both he himself and the new world in which he moved seemed to him more and more unreal the farther he penetrated into it. Sometimes he became dizzy and clasped his forehead. The girl behind him was like a shadow of which he was faintly conscious.

They emerged on to an open place, a broad shore meadow. There were pools everywhere on the path which finally merged into one and formed a shallow canal, half hidden in the grass, through which he splashed, his sabots causing swirls and eddies. He amused himself with this as if he had been a child, but he took the game very seriously and drew his feet carefully through the wetness. He moved more and more as if he were in a dream. Marie-Jeanne struggled on, but she sensitively kept herself several steps behind him. Now he stopped, and she did the same. He stood there shining like a tall, red tongue of flame in the midst of the flat, open country.

He looked around him wondering why he was walking here. Then he wondered where he really was. Most of the field in front of him was flooded and looked like a shallow lake. Over the water was spread a faint shimmer the colour of mother-of-pearl. He saw a long, grey building half sunk in the marshland. The narrow gables and the long extended, low back wall were entirely closed up, without windows or any other opening. An inexpressible solemnity and desolation lay over the old house, which nevertheless seemed to be inhabited. Smoke came from

one of the gable chimneys, fluttered uncertainly before it was drawn up into the still, damp air. Efflam blinked in the sunlight, although it was softened by the sea mist. A strange, witch-like world spread out around him, with secret, grey, shut-up houses, cowering in the landscape, and still more houses, like well-constructed boxes, stood on the flat with their stiff corners and chimneys outlined against the sky. Not a tree to be seen, scarcely even a bush. The sky sank down unhindered and filled the intervening space with its white, sun-bespattered haze, and low between the houses there was yet another sun-white glare, that made his eyes smart.

"The sea," murmured Efflam, and shut his eyelids tightly to shut out the short arrows of light, which were everywhere in this mild grey day. Beyond the broad 'lake', that the spring-tide had left on land, he saw the sea closer. On that side there were no buildings, only a row of boats pulled up high on the beach, their stems and broad sterns standing out like black silhouettes against the skyline. The surface of the sea lay like a shining looking-glass, grey in the mist; everything seemed so strange that even he himself, he standing there on his two legs, his feet in two stout new clogs, would have seemed unreal if he had not heard a voice behind him say:

"Efflam, do you hear the larks?"

He closed his eyes tight. Yes, yes, he heard the larks. There they were in a strong, unbroken trill, proclaiming the spring, filling everything with their song. He could not see the birds: even if his eyes had been less dull than they were, he could not have seen them in the sparkling white-grey light above his head. Marie-Jeanne spoke again:

"Efflam, you must not walk any farther to-day. We'll turn off here towards the road and go home that way."

He obeyed and turned in on the field path she pointed out. It was just as wet as the track they had just left. There was water in the wheel-ruts and in the many holes made by sabots and the hoofs of horses and cows. They walked along, each on their own side of a wheel-rut. Efflam, his eyes running and half closed, heard only as if from a distance the sound of Marie-Jeanne's limping steps. She panted slightly. Very soon he noticed that he was no longer walking on soft, springy ground. He heard the

noise of his own sabots and those of the girl as they struck the firm, asphalt road on their way home.

Now weariness overcame him, he sweated and trembled as if in an *agua*. Marie-Jeanne also was drowsy, she too was affected by the strong air. Everywhere there was the sweetly bitter smell of the rotting seaweed, the smell of the saltiness of the sea, of fish and shell-fish, of manure and newly-turned earth, of sprouting crops and juicy green grass—all this enveloped and stupefied Efflam so that in the end he reeled along the road like a drunken man. Figures swarmed everywhere, on all sides. Out on the flat ground right away towards the edge of the sea he saw them as huge statues, standing out against the sky. Women in black, men in blue or in red like himself. They spat into their hands, they lifted their feet, rested them on the blade of their spades, and with a swing pressed it home. It was a game with the powers of nature, a spring dance with the spade.

Marie-Jeanne stood in the doorway where her aunt usually stood. She fumbled among the folds of her skirt under the elegant apron, embroidered with silk and tiny pearls. At last she found her pocket and her ball of thread. Miserably her fingers felt in her well-groomed hair under her tallest and most beautiful coif. Yes, there was the crochet-hook, hidden away. She began to make the small knots, unconsciously taking refuge, as she usually did, in her work.

Had he noticed that she had put on her grandest, her best clothes to-day? Had he been at all pleased with Joseph's red costume? Had he bothered at all about the new sabots that shoe-maker Kerlivio over there in the main street had brought him as a friendly gift? Had the lovely weather made him happy? Had he—yes, he had heard the larks, but had he noticed the village itself? Noticed that the people had nodded to him and were friendly towards him? Noticed that Uncle Guillaume and his daughters had waved to him from their field, where they were the first in the district to be setting potatoes? Did he really notice when she had pointed out to him that neighbour Hélias was sowing his wheat? Was he pleased that she had found a whole bunch of daisies to put in the vase in front of St. Theresa on her work-table at home?

He had just walked and walked and had appeared to be quite indifferent, and now he was lying on the bed just as he had thrown himself when he came in. He had gone into his room with his sabots still on his feet, and now one lay beneath the bed as if it had fallen off his foot and the other was balanced on his toe ready to fall off at any moment. She went in, bent down and picked up the shoe on the floor and drew the other one off his foot and put them both in the kitchen. Then she came back and looked at him, now more anxious than disappointed.

"Efflam! Efflam Kelou, are you asleep?" she asked.

He lifted his eyelids, weary and indifferent she thought at first, but afterwards she thought remorsefully: 'No, no, he was not indifferent, only absent-minded.' So absent-minded, so far away, so strange, so different—and she was again so distressed that she felt inclined to cry. He looked up questioning and anxious. Then his eyelids closed again, and he immediately breathed evenly as if he were asleep. Marie-Jeanne spread a blanket over him and tiptoed out of the room. Now she was happy, so full of happiness that she could scarcely bear it.

Efflam woke to hear lively conversation going on as he had so often heard before.

When he began to move, waves of nausea came over him, and he felt heavy in his head, but the knowledge that he could no longer escape facing up to life disquieted him and drove him out of the room. More asleep than awake, he passed through the kitchen, where Marie-Pierre was now alone with her girls, teaching Bernadette to crochet her first pair of gloves. Marie-Pierre saw him go and stared heavily and stupidly at his figure as it stood outlined in the doorway. Little Eliane laughed and pointed with her finger, and then her mother noticed Efflam's bare, stockinged feet. She gave the two little girls a push, and in a moment they were at the door. Each of them picked a sabot and rushed out, catching him just as he stepped off the plank on which he had managed to cross dry-shod over all the washing and rain-water that always collected outside the doorstep. The two little girls dressed in trousers knelt down, a little page on each side of their Prince, as he stood with his eyes half closed and allowed them to put on his sabots. Then he went on, turning the

corner towards the main street. The children looked at him and pointed, and behind them in the kitchen doorway stood their mother, her foolish face full of anxiety. She wished she had not been at home alone when he went off. She did not like having that responsibility on her shoulders.

"Run after him and see where he goes," she told her girls. "But keep at a distance from him and look out for cars on the road!"

The elder sister took her little sister by the hand and they ran off, disappearing round the corner by Iegou's bakery.

The first thing Guillaume did when he came back from his afternoon's walk to the harbour was to push his head into the bedroom. He called out in his good-natured voice:

"How are you, Monsieur? Are you there, Efflam? But where are you, Efflam Kelou?"

Marie-Pierre went on with her crochet, looking guiltily down at the table. "He is not here," she said shortly.

"Not here! I saw Marie-Jeanne a minute ago, and she told me he was resting after his walk."

"He went out again," came the laconic answer from his daughter. She lifted her arm in a large, sweeping gesture, bringing the crochet thread with her, and pointed in a general sort of way out of the door. At the very moment Marcel Le Lay came in, as if Marie-Pierre had evoked him with her strong arm.

"Are you going to shoot me, dear Sister-in-law?" asked the fisherman jokingly. "Do you think that I am some official or other come to fetch away the net of the house?"

"Have you seen him?" asked Marie-Pierre hastily, while Guillaume, in spite of his stiff leg, was already out on the road, looking anxiously up and down. Le Lay went on joking as before.

"I've had that pleasure more often than I've wanted it. You don't mean to tell me that he has gone out on his own? That's a dangerous thing to do for anyone with a face like his."

Marie-Pierre took the words literally and began to excuse herself.

"He was not alone, the little girls went after him," she said.

"Naturally," shouted her incorrigible brother-in-law, while he poured himself out some red wine from the litre bottle on the

table. "Naturally! Such little holy men always have girls running after them. They are always followed by a whole crowd of admiring and ministering women. Someone's got to carry their halo for them."

Marie-Suzette came in from the shop, and her eldest daughter complained: "Maman, Marcel is blaspheming and mocking again. He is a positive heathen. It is those godless papers he is always reading."

"Aha," sighed the old woman, and sank down on her box by the stove. "So you're back from the harbour, Marcel. Is the boat ready? Have you got the ice on board?"

"Yes, all's clear. I have not enough bread, that's all. There are so many laying in stores at the moment that the baker has been quite cleaned out. The only baker we've not tried is Jegou, but Marie-Louise has gone there now. Here are your little girls, Marie-Pierre. What news, children? Where did you leave the big-nosed count?"

Guillaume followed his two grandchildren in. Their flushed cheeks and loose plaits showed that they had been running. The younger fisherman stood up and offered his seat to his father-in-law.

"Have you seen him? Where is he?" asked Guillaume.

"He went towards the lighthouse and La Joie!" shouted the two girls together. "He walked along and stretched up his arms several times. He also said something, but we could not hear what it was. We crept along very quietly behind him on the edge of the grass. At the lighthouse he stopped and began talking to the lighthouse. Then we ran home. He went on towards La Joie."

"Crept and crept," muttered the old man disapprovingly. "You mustn't teach your children to creep about, Marie-Pierre." He took up a glass, which his daughter mechanically filled for him, shook himself and emptied the strong, dark wine in a gulp.

"Guillaume-Marie, think of your health!" said Marie-Suzette. "You're drinking before you've eaten."

Her husband ignored the warning. He stared down at the floor, mumbling and gloomy: "He's gone, and he's not well yet. He's walking too far. He stretched up his arms and he talked to the lighthouse. What does that mean?"

"Perhaps he's weak in the head," said Marie-Pierre, and her brother-in-law gave her a reproving look. Marcel was after all very susceptible, although he often spoke in a bitterly bantering tone. He was now affected by the general anxiety and was filled with sympathy.

Marie-Louise came in, leading Odile by the hand and carrying three large, round loaves of bread under her arm.

"Mademoiselle Jegou has been most kind," she shouted. "Their shelves were empty, but she gave me these she had hidden under the counter. 'The young gentleman who lives with you passed by here,' she said; 'he bowed so nicely. He's very polite.' Amélie Jegou was dressed in all her finery, with her big fur cape over her shoulders. She had come from vespers at La Joie. 'I met your guest, Monsieur Kelou,' she said——"

"Met him?"

"She saw Efflam?"

Marie-Louise was not slow to tell them, and was both sarcastic and carelessly expansive as she talked.

"Oh yes, she was quite cheered up, was my fine lady. Her cheeks were quite glowing. She is really good-looking, Amélie, but she is older than I am, I know that for a fact. 'He must have had a good education,' she said, 'perhaps he even comes of a good family.' He gave her such a lovely bow. 'He must also,' she said, 'be a serious young man,' for he said remarkable words to her: 'The light from above is sent to those who sit in darkness; he who walks upon the sea has sent his chosen one'—or something like that. Come on, Marcel, let's go to our own house. Things are so odd here since he came. I always feel uneasy when I am anywhere near his big nose and strange eyes. One does not know what they see and what they mean. In future when you are at sea, Marcel, I will ask Rose to come and sleep in the house with me. She and Odile."

Her husband collected the loaves from the table. Still joking, but in a more laboured way than before, he said as he patted his fair, exuberant wife on the shoulder: "Well, well, come along home to the nets that are waiting to be repaired. Yes—ask your sister and Odile to come and sleep with you while I am away. One never knows what may happen with such an old man of the sea wandering about the roads!"

"Old man of the sea, yes," said Rose from the door leading into the shop. "Old Marie Le Gat was here—she wanted to sell her eggs—and do you know what she said before she went? 'Are you sure,' she said, 'that he is a real man, that fellow in the new red suit whom I met this morning? I who was born at Quiberon,' she said, 'I know that sort. He reminds me of our *Paôtr Pen er Lô*.' What is a *paôtr*, Maman? Is it a sea-troll or shore-ghost?"

"Well, there's a question for you," remarked Marcel, dragging the heavy, broad-hipped Marie-Louise up from her chair and taking her with him.

"Are they saying he is a kind of *paôtr*," babbled the old woman at the stove. "What is a *paôtr*—? No, not as far as I can see, at any rate. He is a real, proper man, but not like the others round here." She remembered the experiences of her youth in Martigues and, forgetting the soup saucepan, went out and waddled slowly towards the corner of the street. There stood Guillaume and Eliane. The wife said in an unusually mild tone of voice:

"Guillaume-Marie, I thought you were going to look for Efflam. I'll keep the soup hot until you get back."

Her husband spat, cleared his throat and spat again, seemingly quite indifferent, and then slouched off. When he got round the corner of the house he began to walk as quickly as his stiff leg allowed, and his grandchild half-ran at his side.

Efflam walked on and on. The sand along the side of the road crunched, but only under one foot, for the other was on the smooth asphalt. He thought of Marie-Jeanne and her uneven walk. There were evidently several disabled people in the district. Two women, both with hip injuries, were walking just in front of him. They both limped, each in their own way, and their high coifs swayed and jerked according to the uneven movements of their bodies. This, combined with the different sounds of his own shoes, made him feel as if he were limping himself. He would take no notice of the two in front of him. 'I will think of something different,' he said to himself—something different. What should he think about? About the storm. About the rain, about their *glau*, *glau*. *Glau* against the blind grey walls and against tightly-closed shutters. *Glau*—no, not that. About the larks, about Marie-

Jeanne and her hump, her limp, or about his own uneven gait on the asphalt and the sand.

He realised that he was mumbling and throwing his arms about as he walked. 'Think of something else,' he said to himself sternly, and kept his hands imprisoned in his pockets. 'If only you knew a little more about yourself, you would have something to think about,' he said to himself sadly. If only he knew from whence he came and why he was here. He did not even know how old he was.

His hands had freed themselves again, and he swung his right arm high above his head as he had done many times before. He found himself saying long and terrifying sentences. Then he was gripped by fear for himself and he grew frightened of the high wall which he saw suddenly in front of him. No, it was more than a wall, it was a tower so high that he had to press his neck back between his shoulders to be able to see it. He grew giddy from standing and staring straight up at it, hearing at the same time the sucking roar of the sea close at hand.

He lifted his arms towards the swaying tower, the top part of which was lost in the mists lying low beneath the evening sky. At last it stood steady as a building should, at last the sea rolled in natural waves, and the meadows and cliffs were still. Efflam pushed his hands into his pockets, turned round and looked with clearer eyes at all that was around him. He thought aloud and calmed himself with his own explanations:

"Now I see quite clearly where I am. Over there lies Kervily, and I have come from there. This is the lighthouse. I know this is so, I have seen the reflector of its beams on the wall of the house just opposite the Garrecs'."

He continued his way more steadily along the asphalt road that turned and then went on farther, parallel with the sea. There was only a protective wall between the road and the beach itself, and no buildings, so that the salt air swept in freely. A little farther on, he saw a grey stone, mast-like structure, a church tower. He struggled towards it, reeling like a sea-sick man, hot, his clothes damp from the sea. The air was strangely warm and saltily sweet, and the seaweed, which lay here in heaps, steamed strongly, making him feel sick. The waves beat lazily, but with heavy strength, against the sea-wall. Out there the breakers boiled

around the reefs. In the midst of all this his ear caught the faint sound of a bell, and he now saw the chapel with its large, low, vaulted roof and its light, open-work tower, clearly in front of him.

People were coming out of the door, and they immediately dispersed along the various small paths that led into the country behind. One single woman came towards him, and the nearer she came the better he could see that she was more elegant than any of the women he had met so far—more elegant even than Marie-Jeanne with her pearl-embroidered apron. He bowed to her and uttered the most solemn and significant words that came into his mind at that moment.

The words he had said continued to echo in his brain after he had passed her and he was again alone: "The light from above is sent to those who sit in darkness; he who walked upon the sea has sent his chosen one."

The unreality of his surroundings was so overwhelmingly strong out here because of the nearness of the sea and the rising humours of spring that he suddenly thought that he should be able to see Him Who walked upon the waves and Whose footsteps he had heard so often in the darkness of the night. Now also, although the waves were beating indolently, almost softly, against the stone wall and the rocks beneath, he could hear the strong footsteps far away in the north-east, a rumbling as of thunder that never ceased. A grey-green desolation lay low over the nearest water. A couple of fishing-boats could be seen, but they were infinitely small out there in the open sea. There were great and strange powers around him—of that there was no doubt. They hovered over the country itself, and he had a perception of broad wings above him.

"It is God," he said with trembling lips, and walked on with bowed head and beating heart. 'I am in the presence of God the Strong,' he thought fearfully.

When Efflam was again able to lift his head and look around him, he found that he was standing in front of the Calvary outside the chapel. He saw three crosses set on a high socle and a sculptured *pietà* in front of the centre cross. Exhausted, he fell on his knees and, looking up, saw the stone figures covered with green, woolly moss. These hairy faces seemed to be both prehistoric and living. He still felt the wings above him. Not the sighing and beat-

ing of wings, but as if they were spread out over him, filling all, pressing him down and at the same time lifting him up.

He stretched out his arms along the sharp lower edge of the socle and remained lying there, lying on his knees, gazing at the cross until his tired head fell forward and he rested his forehead against the stone. He felt pain again. 'Am I bleeding again?' he thought apathetically, scarcely dividing this present time from the time out in the lands of the low tide when he for the first time opened his eyes and saw Marie-Jeanne's welcoming hands, or the moment when he, lying rigid on his sick-bed, had first become aware of the crucifix. The *pictà* Madonna on the Calvary and Marie-Jeanne became one and the same person. He himself was the one taken down from the cross and who rested, wounded and bleeding, in the pitiful arms.

"Marie! Marie, Mother!" he groaned.

Guillaume and Eliane found him in this condition. They remained standing hand in hand, moved and frightened. His sabots lay behind him as if he had felt obliged, out here in the sand and the sedge, to take them off. The grandfather and his grandchild bent down at the same moment, and each of them seized one of the big, wet shoes. Then they stood and waited until he had, as they thought, come to the end of his prayers.

Efflam became hazily conscious that there was someone or something beside him. At first he connected those he could not see with the all-embracing power around him, and he knelt without moving, filled with a new fear, a new expectation. But he slowly began to realise who it was behind him, breathing the same air as himself and exuding his own particular bodily smell.

"Monsieur Garrec," he said in a low voice, without looking round, but he drew in his arms and lumped his back, as if he were preparing for a whipping—or as if he were lying in wait for somebody.

"Efflam!" answered Guillaume in a voice which was strange even to himself.

The young man leaned on the socle, trying to get up on to his benumbed legs. Guillaume and the little girl went forward and took hold of him under the armpits and helped him to get up. Then they bent down and put the wooden shoes in front of him. He slipped his feet into them and allowed the old man and the

child to lead him back through the drizzle, back to the village.

Above their heads the lighthouse stretched its long arms of light towards the four corners of the earth, slowly swinging round, sweeping the horizon, but the light was absorbed by the misty rain and became diffused and sickly red. Before they reached the main street of the old village the fog-siren had begun to sound, and they heard its gloomy beilowing behind them.

CHAPTER FOUR

EFFLAM ROAMED THE COUNTRY—morning, noon and night. His slim, well-built figure in his new red fisherman's costume was seen everywhere. He seemed small, until he stood beside some other man and it was seen that he was half a head taller than men of middle height. He wandered about everywhere and learnt to know the old buttoned-up streets of the village and the newer roads and surroundings. He discovered the innumerable paths which wound through the potato- and onion-fields with their lovely, earthy smell, going straight across newly-sown fields and corn-fields with the thick growth of last year's crop. Then he made an attempt to conquer the open shore meadows, but stood still, gazing out over the waste land like a child whose desires are greater than its courage. The wind nipped at his trousers, clamouring in the stiff wool of his jacket, and blowing through his thick hair; he saw the paths lose themselves in the large pools of water which still remained after the winter and spring rains. He heard the sea-birds away on the shore, and he shivered at their strange, desolate cries, but was drawn by a stronger power out into this terrifying newness. The air itself around him—that more than anything else—was terrifying. The sky arched itself, strangely big, over this village, and it was bigger than ever when he came out on to the meadows and saw it on all sides, all around him, high and broad, going down to meet the little flat tray of earth on which he stood. Fear tied him to the spot, but then he was gripped by exaltation. Never had the earth been cleaner and simpler than here, without a sound, without a tree, without anything between it and the sky above it.

Efflam was shaking with cold. This hard, half-warm March air was penetrating. He returned to the village, his nose blue, returned to the low houses with their half-dark rooms. He did not realise that he was shivering, he was thinking of Marie-Jeanne. "She shall take me out into the fields," he said, "far out across the hinterland, down to the white sandy beach, where the sea makes its wide curve between Kervily and the neighbouring village. We will walk and walk until we reach Trémeur, with its white gables and chimneys, which remind me of a flock of sea-gulls who have settled on a headland out to sea."

He returned with his blue nose to Marie-Suzette's hot soup-kettle, but the cold from outside penetrated right into the kitchen and stole furtively along the cement floor up round his legs, wrapping his body in its damp cold. In the evening the frogs played wildly and deafeningly in the pools round the house. At night there was the sound of rain and the roar of the angry west wind, but in the morning the sun shone again and the wind blew cold and dry from the north-east. Efflam lay in his bed and heard the people of the house cough up the saliva that had settled on their chests during the night, while the stove-rings rattled and there was the clatter of coal. He was well acquainted with all this morning music, but he listened to it carefully as he did to the different sounds of the weather. He himself was too harsh and thick in the chest to be able to clear his throat.

When Guillaume had finished the care of his chest he always solemnly came over to his guest's bed and wished him good-morning.

"*Bon jour, bon jour!* Has Monsieur had a good night? What— you don't know! Is your throat so bad? Then we must ask Dr. Guilcher to have a look at it. Stay in bed, Monsieur Efflam!"

Hardly had the old man turned his back before Efflam was out of bed and dressing in feverish haste. He must get out, he must get out under the great sky, out into the dangerous currents of air. He sat down at the breakfast-table, dipping his bread into his bowl of coffee with the others. He sat with the hot bowl between his long, bony fingers, warming himself and looking down into the steaming, light brown liquid, still half asleep. The door, as always, stood wide open, and its framework outlined a picture in the centre of which stood a group of stiff grey gables like a group

of monks in their rigid habits. At night, in the moonlight, they were still more ghostly, these larger and smaller grey gables of the houses just opposite.

"Drink your coffee, Efflam," exhorted Guillaume. "It'll do you good." And the guest obediently lifted the bowl to his lips and felt that the warm coffee loosened his strained throat. Then the old mother opened her toothless, spluttering mouth.

"As Efflam doesn't want to stay in bed and as it's fine, he could go to Tréoultré and show the doctor his throat. Anyone new to this district always suffers from throat trouble."

"Yes," added Marie-Pierre—she also spoke thickly because she was brushing her hair and had one of her plaits between her teeth while she arranged combs and bands. "Yves had a bad throat every spring and autumn for a long time. He didn't improve until I gave him my letter with earth from Lisieux, and now he always wears it on his chest; but then he was born in Brittany, while Efflam Kelou comes from——"

Marie-Pierre stopped suddenly and looked at the new member of the family as if she had only just remembered that there was something strange about him. She burst out:

"Yes, where do you come from? It must be very strange to be alive without having been born somewhere and without having a birthday or ever growing any older. Look at me, Maman, I shall soon have a large, bare patch on my head just like yours." She looked at herself in the glass, dipped her comb in water and began to pass it through her back hair once more, still full of foolish wonder: "Fancy being the same age all the time!"

Efflam noticed how the hair and the coil seemed to grow into each other and how the high, tower-like erection was finally arranged. He saw Marie-Pierre wet her short brown fingers with a little saliva, arrange an obstinate piece of hair, he saw her lips move——

Never to have been born. To have existed from the beginning of time. The words followed him as he tramped along the street and on along the main road. He was walking towards the village of Tréoultré, the chief village in the district, and he had a big church with a high steeple as his goal. Like a mighty ship the old church lay in the middle of the plain, with the houses collected

round it like smaller and larger vessels. Broad and heavy, it looked as if able to weather many storms, but one of its towers leaned slightly as if the power of the winds had at some time or other been too strong for it.

Heavily, like the rhythm of his wooden sabots on the asphalt, the words beat in his brain: 'From the beginning of the world I am. In eternity's eternity I am.'

He broke off suddenly, and asked himself childishly: 'I? Are those hands really me? Are they never to die and become bits of bone in the earth?' He lifted his hands and walked on while he gazed at them, smiling. The people he met turned round and looked after him in surprise, catching hold of any words they heard as he passed.

'Oh, my hands!' He smiled to himself, staring at his hands. 'My hands, wounded—and healed. You were with me when I once, as he——'

He looked up from his hands and started as the words his tongue had framed seemed to materialise, although they had not yet been spoken. The Crucified One hung there on the cross, sculptured roughly in grey granite, standing by the roadside. Efflam took a few steps forward, stretched out his arms and shouted so loudly that those who passed him on the road stopped, and those who were working on the fields stood still and leaned for a moment on their spades.

"My hands! My cross!" he cried.

After that he bent his head and continued to walk mechanically until he began to hear the rhythm of his own footsteps. 'Where am I? Why am I walking here?' he wondered. 'And what was it that happened a minute ago?' Had he done anything, said anything? People were looking at him in a strange way. He looked round and saw the roadside crucifix he had just passed; he turned to the left and heard the thunderous beat of the waves against the cliffs of Saint-Fiacre far away. Then he looked to the right, where the fields stretched right down to the sea; the clouds drifted over his head like grey-shadowed, sunlit sails.

The feeling of unreality took hold of him again. He could not remember what he had said at the Calvary, but he tramped on, thinking:

'The people in the fields know what I said. They are my

witnesses. And the Father witnesses with me.' He knew that God and His Holy Spirit brooded over these fields. 'God lives here and I am his only begotten son——' He walked on, talking to himself as he approached the village and the group of church towers in its midst.

Before he reached the village he passed the cemetery. The wall that surrounded it was so high that only the very tallest monuments could be seen. The monuments were always crosses with the figure of the suffering Saviour sculptured in stone or in gilded iron. When Efflam suddenly looked up and, quite unprepared, saw this forest of crucified figures in front of him, he was gripped by horror. He walked quickly on, his shoulders hunched, opening and shutting his hands, feeling such an intense pain in his palms that he whitened under its effect.

Efflam had forgotten that he was to visit the doctor, but Dr. Guilcher came upon his late patient as he was getting into his car in front of his house. The doctor shook Efflam by the hand and spoke to him, but was scarcely given an answer. He scrutinised him carefully: what could this new, absent-minded, sleep-walking attitude mean? Had not the boy understood his greeting and the questions he had asked him, or was he only indifferent? The doctor could not make up his mind, but, as he realised that Efflam's throat and chest were affected, he contentedly fastened on that and burst out:

"Aha, aha! There's something wrong with your throat, I see. A slight bronchitis perhaps. Come to my consulting-room and let's have a look at you. Come along, Monsieur—Monsieur Efflam, isn't it? Come along."

He led him through the iron gates and along the avenue leading up to the house, for behind his high garden wall an avenue of low, uneven cypress trees hid themselves, and there were also espaliers on which grew fruit trees, and there were many other growing things.

"Yes, look at my garden," laughed the doctor when he saw that the young man had at last woken up and was looking around him in surprised delight. "A real idyll, isn't it? A couple of flower-beds—they do very well here where they're sheltered. I've also got a lilac tree, and it has lots of buds this year. And then

my palm tree, my poor palm. D'ye know what the priest said? That a palm like this made him think of the tousled old camels in the zoological garden. Ha ha! He's a great joker is our parish priest. Have you met him yet? No, I understand you don't go to church. Yes, this is my little idyll. But no, now I must think of serious matters. You'll find the waiting-room nice and warm."

They went towards the front door, and Efflam began to walk up the spotless steps. Guilcher stopped him:

"Stop! Stop! Not even I am allowed to do that! Don't you know our stern women yet? Even the doctor must carry his sabots in his hand." The younger man stopped and obediently stepped out of his clogs, leaving them right in the middle of the top step. Guilcher grunted crossly and pushed them to one side. He exclaimed, annoyed, but at the same time amused: "Come, Prince! Let me have a look at your throat!"

When the doctor had finished the examination and was busy with another patient, Efflam suddenly appeared at the door of the consulting-room. Guilcher looked up, irritated.

"What's the matter now?" he asked sternly.

"*Monsieur le Docteur* did not show me his flowers."

"What's that?"

"But I've found the bush that Monsieur did not show me. I wonder whether I might take some of the flowers?"

"Take them, take them, but off you go and shut the door!" shouted the doctor without giving himself time to go into the matter.

Efflam bowed and went back to the doctor's cherished camellia bush, which he had found when he went round the garden by himself. The bush was in full flower. Solemnly he broke off every flower and collected them into a large bunch, leaving the bush entirely bare. On his way back he held the flowers carefully in front of him as he passed the church, the cemetery and the roadside crucifix. He walked quickly and had almost reached the outskirts of his own village when he felt suddenly weary. His face blotchy and his eyes smarting, he tottered through the many short streets, rounding the right corners as if by a miracle. At last he reached the little cul-de-sac where Marie Le Donche lived with her daughters and found their house, the last in the row.

Marie-Jeanne and her mother had seen him coming, and they saw him stop and pull himself together and arrange his bunch of flowers. They were sitting each in her own chair on either side of the front door, crocheting. The colour rushed into Marie-Jeanne's face, for he went straight to her and laid the flowers beside one of her wooden shoes, which she had taken off and in which she had put the ball of thread with which she was working. The flaming red and white bunch shone like a sacrificial fire at her feet. They looked at each other without saying a word.

Next minute he was gone, stumbling on the cobblestones in the uneven street. Marie Le Donche looked at him over her glasses as he went, compressing her lips, while the high cheekbones worked and her eyes grew hard and stern. Then she turned towards her daughter. Marie-Jeanne sat with her hands against her heart, looking at the flowers without daring to touch them. Her mother softened. She looped her thread, and her hook began to work again, while her thoughts caused shadows of anxiety, and the light of tender expectation, to flit unnoticed across her face.

Efflam wandered round the country and left no road nor path unexplored. He met the working girls and women hurrying at all sorts of odd times to the small canning factories down near the harbour.

He looked at the wide stretch of shore that came and went according to the height of the tide. Just outside the pier lay the grey breakwater formed like a broad V, and the seagulls circled round, sharp-eyed, and searching for food. Beyond the large concrete V of the harbour there were a group of high blocks of rock round which the waves continually broke, throwing up a rain of spray, which was plainly visible as far back as this.

He began to shiver and turned his back on the dark, gloomy cliffs and looked instead at the boats which were tied up along the quay. Some of the fishermen were working there, arranging the tackle in the boats, seeing to the stores. They were talking in Breton. The words came from their mouths like short, guttural blows from far down in their throats, but the many repetitions of the same sentence helped Efflam to understand them. He took a tranquil pleasure in reading the names of the boats. *L'Espérance*,

he read. *Toujours Marie* one was called. On the next boat stood the name *Brin du Muguet*—and on the following one, *Le Cormoran*. "The *Cormorant*," he said thoughtfully. That was a name he knew. He had heard it at home. It must be the boat belonging to Garrec's son-in-law.

Efflam went inland, away from the sea and along the road, and the men standing by the lee wall stared at him as before, with their small, sharp eyes, and put their hands into the pockets of their low-hanging, sack-like trousers. The stranger was less absent-minded nowadays. He saw them and greeted them with a solemn bow. Any man who managed to pull himself together in time mumbled a greeting. The others spat from sheer confusion, and those who had been prompt enough to say good-day now felt awkward and shy, so they spat also.

Efflam walked up the main street. Children in clattering wooden sabots, holding thick slices of bread, spread with thick, yellow butter, ran zigzagging from one side of the street to the other, munching as they ran. When Efflam passed, they stopped, turned moon-like faces with high cheek-bones towards him and whispered behind his back. Then they went on with their games, running between young men carrying nets on their shoulders and old men ambling homeward with one or two mackerel threaded on a little piece of steel wire. They jumped across rivers of reddish-brown water and smooth tar, which ran from places where large tubs and cauldrons were being emptied and rinsed out. Women with stiff necks and broad backs walked slowly along the road, and looked sideways at the stranger. As he passed them he bowed to them, and the reply was a trembling of the stiff upper lip, a trembling which in some cases turned into a 'Good-day' or 'M'sieur', but it took them so long to decide to say it that it mostly remained unsaid.

A short distance from the harbour and close to the main street lay an old, roofless church with the remaining side tower sticking up from the broken stone wall. A fisherman was fixing his net on to one of the tumbledown walls. Efflam wished him good-morning as he passed on his way to the church door. The bearded fisherman nodded, surprised, and with the nervous look that shy, reserved people often get when they meet a stranger. He then

pretended that he did not see Efflam, who was turning the handle of the simple door made of boards, without result. When he was unable to open it he made his way into the middle of the street and shouted:

"He who has ears to hear let him hear! I had to drive out the hawkers and the money-lenders from my holy temple. I have been forced to weep over it and allow it to be rased to the ground. But what can I do with this generation who leaves my house standing with a ruined roof and locked doors?"

The children stood still, with their teeth hidden in the fat butter, their eyes wide open, and the fisherman looked up furtively from their nets. When Efflam had finished what he wished to say and they saw him walking away down the street, there was fear in many eyes. This ruined church awoke in them a feeling of guilt. It was perhaps reprehensible that so little had been done to restore it. The worst of it was that, as they lacked a real church of their own, they had to use the chapel out there by the sea and were often, therefore, too lazy to go to Mass. Particularly the men knew that this was the case. If the church here in the village had been usable they would easily have slipped in on their way to the harbour and said their prayers. But now—perhaps he was right in his condemnation and his cries of woe, that 'prince', as some people called him. Perhaps it would be better to be more generous next time when the priest asked them for money for a new roof.

They thought like this, and as usual they spat, the first time from pure uncertainty, then to hide their qualms of conscience, and at last, and more powerfully than ever, in defiance. No, they said to themselves, there are so many more important things than churches and chapels, we have enough of them for our needs—half a dozen, if not more, in this parish alone, and many of them in ruins. It was not the time to put roofs and belfries on ruins that belonged to a time that was past. Kervily and the other villages on the peninsula were now going forward to another time of greatness—the chimneys of the canning factory rose towards heaven, and it was they after all that would in future look after the community and decide their development.

Jehan Lescantin, handcart in front of him, caught up with Efflam. "Words, words, words!" he said mockingly.

Efflam fixed his brown, weather-affected eyes on the fisherman and said seriously:

"The Word existed before the beginning of the world. All things live by and through words and without the power of the word nothing can live."

The man stopped his barrow, and the two of them stood there, looking at each other, until Lescantin's own red-rimmed eyes grew damp and he asked:

"Why are you looking at me?" and, without knowing why, his knees began to shake suddenly, and also his hands, which lay on the shafts of the barrow

"Why are you looking at me?" he asked once again.

"I do not condemn you," said the other simply, but with such deep seriousness that Lescantin trembled anew. At the same time he felt so full of anger that he foamed at the corners of his mouth.

"I do not condemn you," he hissed as he started his cart again. Should this man who had been thrown ashore, and who certainly had a screw loose, be allowed to go round talking like this? On the other hand, who would pay any attention to the blame and praise he was scattering about? It affected no one, any more than the spittle he himself now so mockingly squirted out through the hole between his front teeth. And Jehan Lescantin spat, but in his violence he had forgotten to think of the wind. He spat into a head-wind and immediately felt his face wet with small pearls of saliva

Jehan stopped once or twice to answer people's questions about the fishing. In this way he was slowed up so that Efflam caught him up. He was therefore again obliged to see the big nose of the stranger sticking out at the side of the cart. From pure defiance he did not increase his speed, but looked the other man straight in the face. When they met the lorry, and he was forced to push his cart to the side, against the wall of the house, and wait, Efflam also was obliged to wait. As the high lorry braked and slowed down just for a moment opposite them, and they stood together in its shadow, Efflam turned his white face towards Lescantin and he uttered the words:

"Why do you doubt?—look at my hands!"

The lorry had passed, and Lescantin pushed the cart along the road alone. He felt in a strange mood. The whole incident seemed

to him now like a dream from which he could not free himself. "Look at my hands"—Was it true that he had seen those two hands there in the shadow under the wall? Seen them shining, long and narrow? The palms scarred? Was it true, or had he himself, Jehan Lescantin, a screw loose? Mechanically he continued on his way, while the sweat stood out on his forehead and the wheels repeated the words: "Why do you doubt? Look at hands."

The fact was that he bore in his heart the burden of an unredeemed promise. Two years ago he had been out on a very tough fishing expedition. That year also he had been in the *Cormorant*, which then had another *patron*. They were fishing for tunny and had been lying alone out at sea for several days. They had met a storm and had had engine trouble at the same time—yes, there was scarcely a misfortune that had not visited them. The last and the worst, however, was a fire. When fire broke out, and after the sea had taken the jolly-boat and had knocked a hole in their motor-boat, then he, Lescantin, had made his vow: If the Holy Virgin saved the crew he would walk barefoot in the procession of the next *Pardon* at La Joie. He would do this in gratitude and as a testimony to all those present. They were saved; he and all the crew got ashore safely. The spring and the summer passed, and it was August, and the fifteenth, the day of the Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven, was the day of the great *Pardon*.

That day he, Jehan, lay in the grass with his companions, slightly fuddled after the big festival meal at which he had been present, smoking his tobacco and mocking at the pious and the priests, and at the banners and the statues which they carried round in the procession. Later, when the autumn storms raged and he was out in bad weather, he again promised silently and honestly to fulfil his vow at the next *Pardon*. But another winter and another spring and summer and another August 15th had come and gone, and he was still afraid to take off his sabots and to walk with the women and the skirted priests in the procession.

It was not due to cowardice. As soon as he reached land, processions and veneration of Our Lady seemed to him to be purely childish nonsense. But out there *au large*—in the midst of the mighty ocean—it seemed to him very possible that unseen powers

existed. It was in fact more difficult to ignore them than to believe in them. Yes, yes, his faith was as firm as a rock out there at sea, and especially when he was in danger—this he knew because he had looked death in the face more than once and had not lost his head. No, he had been quite calm, and clear—so clear that he had seen things that he otherwise only surmised or to which he was generally entirely blind.

But afterwards! Afterwards the doubts rose up as strongly as ever, and he did not think he could help this. He was to be praised as little for the fact that his faith was sometimes as firm as a rock as he was to be blamed for the emptiness that succeeded it. He thought that he must be honest towards his own doubts and acknowledge that they existed. Doubt was not an easy thing to bear, for his reason and self-assurance were undermined by the nagging restlessness that doubt brought with it. When he thought of his vow he was consumed by feelings of shame and fear. Therefore he walked along now reminding himself of the fact that God—if He really existed—often used fools for His work, saying through them that which He wished said.

"Why do you doubt? Behold my hands." He could rid himself of the vision as little as he could rid himself of the words.

The wheels of the cart jumped and bumped on the uneven street, and the effort needed to push it along gave Jehan Lescantin time to calm himself before he reached the Garrecs' family house. It was therefore with mixed feelings, but mostly with vexation, that he saw Efflam Kelou standing at the door. He dropped the shafts of the cart, dried his forehead and cheeks and glared at the young man. He began to feel unsure of himself again, but happily at that moment he caught sight of Marie-Louise sitting at the window, and Marcel Le Lay came out and began to help him unload the cart. The latter turned towards Efflam and said jokingly and in the highest good humour:

"Look, there's the Count himself! Come in and have a Martell—it always has a good effect."

Efflam immediately and willingly made his way between high heaps of net which lay on either side of the door. When he reached the threshold, he said to Lescantin, who was lifting down the last of the load from the cart:

"Follow me!"

Lescantin swore and felt inclined to go home immediately or to the Jegous at the corner and drink a glass of red wine with something really strong in it. But his *patron* had invited him in, and besides he had a weakness for a good Martell, which was not offered to a man every day of the week. Just then Marie-Louise opened the window and called to him.

"Come along in, Jehan. You're not going anywhere else, are you?"

He blew his nose and went in, but found to his great annoyance that Efflam was still in the entrance and that he bowed, pushed the door wide open and preceded him into the kitchen. Here also there were heaps of strong-smelling nets, for the kitchen was filled with fishing tackle, and the housewife's busy fingers were working on larger and much coarser knotting operations than when she made the light thread gloves for the ladies of Paris and the Colonies. She pushed her drawing-awl behind her ear and with a spoilt, affected laugh allowed herself to be persuaded to stop work. Heavily and noisily she rose to her feet and rolled across to the table, just as those who were standing there lifted their glasses with the golden-brown liquid in it.

"*Amitié*," said Marie-Louise and looked sentimentally at her guests.

"*Yec'hed mat*," grunted the two fishermen indulgently. And Le Lay turned good-humouredly to his father-in-law's protégé, who stood there without having touched his drink, and asked him:

"Do you know what *yec'hed mat* means?"

"It means: 'Pigs have long ears,'" rudely interrupted Lescantin, who was now thawing up a little and so began to express his rather coarse humour. Marie-Louise protested:

"Oh, you bad man! He's fooling you, Efflam. He thinks that you don't understand Breton at all. It means 'Cheerio'. It means 'A good health to you'. *Yec'hed mat*, to you!" she touched the young man's glass with her own, looking him straight in the eyes. "Drink to our friendship," she said flirtatiously.

No one knew whether Efflam had meant to taste the cognac or not, because, before he had time to drink, Le Lay's fist shot out and he knocked the glasses from both Efflam's and from his wife's hand. Lescantin pulled his cap down over his forehead, humped

his back and moved towards the door. His eyes, generally so gloomy, shone with a roguish light under the long, bushy eyebrows.

"Well, I must be off!" he said as he went.

Marie-Louise clapped her hands to her head and she also ran out. She went to her mother next door, sobbing loudly.

Now only Le Lay and Efflam remained, standing opposite each other. The older man was rather taken aback when he saw that the expression on the other's face was completely unchanged. This deterred him from hitting again, although his fist was already clenched to do so—instead he allowed his hand to relax. Then he pointed to the splintered glass on the stone floor and said mockingly and in a peremptory voice:

"Pick up that glass!"

Efflam looked at him with a glance that was clearer than usual, clearer and more friendly. He had been looking in an absent-minded way at the room itself, the young couple's new home with its rows of shining copper saucepans and its white tiles. He had scarcely been conscious of what had taken place, even if the words, that had been spoken as sharply as shooting-stars in a dark night, had penetrated his consciousness. He had seen Marie-Louise's juicy, red mouth and for a moment had felt himself sinking down in a stupefying embrace. He felt slightly dizzy, but the whole experience had been so impersonal, as if a force of nature rather than a definite woman had tried to capture, numb and suffocate him. It was all over now, and his eyes turned questioningly towards the broad, temperamental fisherman.

"Pick up the splinters!" repeated Le Lay, his lips trembling, his hands also, but his anger was like a boomerang, which turned back on to himself. He realised his own weakness and was infuriated by it. Never before had he been so vacillating as he was now in the presence of this fool.

"Pick up the splinters," he said, only to find that the next minute he was himself on his knees picking up the small, sharp pieces, which he laid in a heap on the table. Still kneeling, he saw over the edge of the table that Efflam had quietly gone away.

Efflam walked into the kitchen next door, where Guillaume sat

trying to spell out an article in a paper, while Rose at the other side of the table was making lace for the bands of a new coif. Another woman, the one he had met once before outside the little chapel, was there, but she was doing nothing, only sitting there squeezing a little lace-edged handkerchief in her hand. Efflam bowed, and the woman stretched out both hands towards him. Guillaume looked up over his spectacles and asked with an irony that would hardly have been expected of him:

"Have you met Amélie Jegou, Efflam? Mademoiselle Jegou has come to see us only because of you. She has never found her way here before." Then he again became absorbed in his paper. Amélie's cheeks flushed in her narrow face. She spoke in an affected voice:

"Monsieur Garrec is joking. I have seldom time to go out except to Mass. But I came to ask Rose to make two mitres for me. I do not wear the very highest kind. Do you not think, Monsieur Kelou, that we would be wise to keep to the original Kervily head-dress? It is more unpretentious."

"But the old ones are so dull," said Rose Galvez indifferently as she pulled the bobbins in and out and moved the pins. "What do you think, Efflam, would not Marie-Jeanne's mother look quite different if she wore a high mitre? And how would Marie-Jeanne look without one?"

Guillaume looked up from his paper. He watched Efflam, who was sitting there on one of the small, rickety kitchen chairs and who was gazing in a melancholy way into the half-dark bedroom, from the farthest corner of which sounded Marie-Suzette's snores and Marie-Louise's sobs. His eyes, which had before been so sarcastic, softened.

"All this is women's chatter," he said. "Don't listen to them, Efflam. To-morrow I will take you with me to the beach. It will be very low water to-morrow because of the spring-tides, so we shall probably find a great many good things."

"I can't go on the beach at low tide without Marie-Jeanne," said Efflam, his forehead puckered and an anxious expression on his face. They all three looked at him, chiefly because he so seldom said anything, except those strange words he uttered now and again as he walked along the road. Mademoiselle Jegou rose uncertainly, but said fussily:

"I can't stay any longer now, Monsieur Kelou. I only came to say that my brother, the baker, would be glad to assist you when you are quite well again. He begged me to tell you that he will be glad to receive you in his bakery if that would suit you. Because," she grew more and more uncertain and looked appealingly towards Guillaume, who was now interested and was listening with greater friendliness than before—"Because Monsieur will want to find some work, and it is not a bad thing to be a baker. Bread is something we all need. Come in and talk to my brother, if Monsieur feels he would like to start. We have also—forgive me for saying so, Monsieur Garrec, but it just happens to be the case—we have a rather bigger house, and there are not so many of us in the family. Monsieur can therefore have his own room with us. That is all I came to say. *Au revoir*, Rose; *Adieu*, Messieurs!"

Mademoiselle Jegou departed. Guillaume rustled the paper unnecessarily loudly and could not get the pages to turn over properly. He was irritated and glared jealously.

"What do you say to becoming a baker?" he asked

"I shall be going out on the *Cormorant* with Marcel Le Lay," declared Efflam from where he stood in the open doorway. The others looked up, very much surprised. All turned to Marie-Louise, who came out of the bedroom, her eyes red with weeping. She dried them with a corner of her apron and said uncertainly:

"Has he asked you?"

"He will ask me," answered Efflam.

Rose got up to answer the ping of the shop bell. As she passed she said scornfully:

"Are you a Quiberon-*paôt* and therefore know all that's going to happen in advance?"

The father struck the table with his paper. "Women's chatter," he burst out, "don't listen to that sort of talk, Efflam. You are tired, my friend, but Madame is lying in there snoring like a hippopotamus and you cannot get the rest you need. And you, Marie-Louise, have sobbed and howled without waking her. What shall I do? I was going to Hélias to pay for the seed corn, but here I am waiting and waiting for the money while the old lady snores. Where are you going, Rose?"

"In to Maman! I want some change," answered his young daughter, brandishing a thousand-franc note. She went into the

bedroom and coolly shook her mother's heavy body, so full of spring weariness.

Marie-Louise dried her eyes and let herself stumble as she crossed the threshold, falling against Efflam. She lifted her face, with her red lips, and said with an affected sob:

"Is my husband very angry with me? Is he angry with both of us, with you and with me?"

Rose Galvez appeared with a bundle of notes in her hand. Contrary to her usual custom, she went back to the shop by the outer way, for no other reason, it seemed, but to stroke her arm and side against their guest, while she looked over her shoulder at her sister in a teasing, penetrating way. She managed to drop a note, thus gaining more time at the door. She then re-arranged the bundle and said, while the dimples appeared on her round, white cheeks:

"Do you believe, Marie-Louise, that a sea-*paôtr* bothers about you and your quarrels with Marcel? He has more agreeable things to think of, haven't you, my *paôtr*? Marie-Jeanne is welcome to turn you into a prince and call you Efflam for all I care. To me you will always be *paôtr*." She stood quite close to him while she spoke. Her mouth too was red, but it was less full, and her white teeth were smaller and sharper. She pushed out her lips as if to kiss every time she said the word '*paôtr*'. Marie-Louise extended her fingers like a cat after her sister, scolding her:

"Why have you come this way? You don't usually. What do you think Corentin Galvez would say if he heard all your stupid chatter about *paôtres*?"

"He'd soon console himself with a mermaid!" laughed the younger sister, and hurried away at last. Efflam had drawn himself away from the two angry sisters as they stood in the light. He noticed Rose's clean-cut, thin lips, her sharp row of white teeth, and now he saw her slender legs as she disappeared into the shop. But he had been slow in taking in what he saw: while it was there in front of him it was something impersonal, which roused his admiration and confused him. The fisherman was eager and self-important, his mind already full of the events of the moment.

"Marie-Louise," he shouted. "Where are you, Marie-Louise? I have told my crew we will spend the night on board this evening

so that we can weigh anchor the moment the tide turns. Come and give me the money for the wine to take with us. And I must have my soup early this evening!"

He ran past Efflam, glancing at him as he passed. Then he looked round the kitchen and burst out:

"Where is Rose? I want to ask her to come and sleep in the house while I am away. My wife's frightened at being alone. Can you believe it, Father-in-law, she's frightened."

"No," said Marie-Louise sharply. Her eyes were now quite dry. "I am not frightened. Rose didn't sleep with me all last week. It was just rubbish her saying that she'd come. I am no worse than any of the other fishermen's wives. Come along and I will mend the last net and I'll see that your soup is ready in time."

She pushed her way from right to left with her broad, round elbows and ran clumsily, but with great physical strength, across the swaying plank to her own house. Marcel shrugged his shoulders, spread out his fingers in a speaking gesture, and then went off after her.

The days passed, and Marie-Jeanne sat there crocheting, gazing restlessly along the road. Rumours came to her from all quarters telling her of Efflam's doings. He did such and such a thing, he said this or that. She received all the news as if she were a mother whose child had gone out into the world by himself to find his own feet; but she trembled from anxiety and prayed earnestly, struggling all the time with a great longing to see him, or to put on her wooden shoes and hasten round the corner to her uncle's house. But her mother kept her at home. Not with words only, but with the strong power of her will. They heard a great deal about his doings, for rumour has wings, news spreads with the wind. Anything that happened at one end of the village was, the next moment, known at the other end.

CHAPTER FIVE

EVERY AFTERNOON between five and seven o'clock the seine dragners returned home from their twelve-hour day. And when

all went well the mackerel-boats returned on Friday evenings or Saturday mornings after a week's fishing far out in the Atlantic. On Saturdays they recovered themselves and assessed their gains, and on Sunday they went out for a new week's work.

This Saturday morning Efflam wandered about in what might well have been called an underwater world, soft, damp, wet, with witch-like sunshine shrouded in sea mist. Then the mists were pushed aside and the sky brightened into a pale blue, darkening lower down where the dampness from the sea was dissolved into a haze of gold and red and blue and dusky violet. He walked through a village decked out as for festival, himself carrying a big round rock-lobster. During his wanderings he had reached the harbour and had stood by the pier. Then a fisherman had taken the giant crab out of his well, and, on a sudden impulse, had handed it to the young man.

The village was decorated as for a feast. The nets hung on the lime-white fronts and grey gables of the houses like large brown-winged butterflies. The old, roofless church was decorated. The five-hundred-year-old country house, with its solid, round tower and its high garden wall, had also been decorated with brown butterflies and rosettes. The priest, who lived in the old house, came out in his long soutane and his large sabots and got into his Ford car, which was as worn and spotty as were the priest's own clothes. Efflam stepped aside as the car backed out of the shed where it was kept, and turned between the festoons of nets which, hanging from the walls of the houses, spread themselves out almost over the street itself. He bowed to the priest in the same way as he bowed to everyone else, but the man behind the wheel was too busy to notice him, and the car started, bumping and rattling along. Suddenly Caroline Garrec was standing in front of him, having just jumped off a shining, polished bicycle. The girl was also in her best clothes, but was more colourful than the village in her wide, dark-green frock and her short, raspberry-red jacket, and her yellow leather shoes with thick crêpe soles. She tossed her loose, untamed hair off her face.

"Good-morning," she said shyly, and Efflam held out his free left hand to her.

"What have you got in the other hand?" asked Caroline

inquisitively, forgetting her shyness. He showed her his right hand, in which he was holding the two strong, front claws of the crab in the way that the fisherman had shown him. The other long claws were waving about angrily fighting the air.

"Isn't he a fine fellow!" he said. "I've just been given him down in the harbour and I should like to give him to your mother. Never again shall she feel she is a poor widow with no one to support her. She shall never want for anything in future."

Caroline looked at him suspiciously, and he returned her look with great seriousness. Then he said:

"You doubt, like Lescantin. Do you not know that I can put this crab down on the ground like this and turn him into a dragon? The dragon that Prince Efflam killed? I have not come to do signs and wonders; but for your sake, because you are so innocent, I will work a miracle. Do you want to see this crab turned into a dragon?"

She stared at him irresolutely as he bent down, stretched out his arm and held the old crab against the grey dust of the street, while he fixed his eyes on her face. She took hold of her cycle bar hurriedly and burst out:

"I'm going home and I'll tell Maman to put on the crab-kettle. I'll go on in advance." She rushed off, her cycle shining in the sun as she threaded her way through the streets, while her hair stood straight up on her neck.

Efflam got up, sighed and looked at the crab. "It's difficult to find faith," he mumbled, "but you who deny miracles, you still believe in the miracles that live the body. You believe in the cure that heals sickness. . . . But I have not been sent to heal, heal, heal."

Still holding the crab, he had mounted a stone on the side of the road and was speaking straight out into the air over the heads of the people who had collected round him and were listening to him. He saw them, but he spoke past them; as if he were speaking to a greater, although invisible, crowd of listeners:

"If I did signs and wonders with legs and hips and lungs and kidneys, then you would stretch out your hands longingly to me, and believe in the midst of your unbelief. But no sign shall be given this unbelieving generation. I have not come to heal the

body, but to save the soul. Nobility and purity of mind are the treasures that I seek."

Those who had happened to be there now began to move away and went in their various directions, laughing and muttering among themselves. Efflam held the crab with its convulsively curved claws high above his head and cried after them:

"Are you turning away from me again? Do you not know that it is because of your worldliness that I have again clothed myself in flesh so that I may once more suffer and sacrifice myself for you? For the sins of the world are greater than Our Lord Himself had foreseen. The old sacrifice is no longer sufficient, but the love of the Father is inexhaustible, and his outstretched arm never tires. But no sign shall be given . . ."

Efflam had talked himself hoarse. Without noticing his immediate surroundings, he walked past the people who had again collected round him. When he had walked a little way up the street he noticed the crab that he was still carrying and he remembered where he was going.

When Efflam at last reached Marie Le Donche's house, he saw the two sisters sitting outside it on either side of the porch door. Marie-Jeanne was working as usual, but Caroline's head was hidden in her hands and she was sobbing. He stopped between the two of them, looking from one to the other.

"Why is Caroline crying?" asked Efflam.

No one answered, but the elder sister threw a hasty glance towards the stone wall against which was leaning the bicycle, the bicycle on which the younger girl had rushed up and down the street only a short while ago. Caroline also lifted her tear-stained face, looked at the shining plaything, and again bent her head. Before Efflam had had time to repeat the question, she sprang up from the stone on which she had been sitting and went into the house, and her subdued, bitter, childish sobs were heard through the open window.

"Why is your sister crying?" asked Efflam.

Marie-Jeanne took up her ball of thread and pushed it under her arm. She altered her position and sat in such a way that not only did her hump look larger, but the impression was also given that her shoulders were crooked. She looked past Efflam at the

cycle, her eyes coal-black and sharp. Then she said in a hard tone of voice:

"It's I who have made her cry. I have been scolding her. I even hit her. She had no right to go and spend money on that bicycle."

Efflam looked down at Marie-Jeanne where she sat in her soft velvet, her shining satin and her lace as fine as cobwebs. Her mitre, set on her shining, black head, was pointing crookedly to one side, mercilessly exposing her brown face with its snub nose to sun and rain as well as to the eyes of the onlookers.

"You sit there like an ugly witch," he said, "ugly and evil you are."

She blenched as from a blow, but her eyes still shot looks of hatred from under her eyelids.

"Why shouldn't Caroline buy a bicycle?"

Then Marie-Jeanne crumpled up. The tears came like a bitter stream. She spoke without daring to look higher than Efflam's wooden shoes, where he stood between gillie-flowers and stocks. She sat there like a penitent, with her hands clasped behind her back.

"I was unkind to Caroline. I longed to hit her. And I did, too. Why should she come home with a bicycle when she has promised to help me to save money to pay Maman's taxes? Also, Maman has needed a new shawl for a long time and new glasses. I've saved, I have worked till one and two in the morning, while Caroline . . . First she took her money and bought herself a fine new dress and a new red jacket, and then she bought herself real leather shoes. And now all that she had left, and more too, went in buying the bicycle. She says that she needs it for the factory, but that's not true, for she lives so near. No, she wants it so that she can ride to Tréoultré on Saturday evenings and go to the cinema, and rush round on Sundays and be seen in all her new-fashioned clothes. She wants to ride off to the football and to the *Purdons*. She wants to go everywhere and enjoy herself and go to dances. That's why I scolded her. That's why she's crying."

Now Marie-Jeanne's own tears were flowing freely. She sobbed both bitterly and remorsefully. While she was speaking she realised, through his silence, that Efflam neither pitied her nor

defended her. It increased the bitterness of the moment, but it helped her to regain her self-control.

After that neither of them spoke for some time, so that in the silence Caroline's loud sobs behind the curtain were very audible. Then Efflam said:

"Look, to-day I have brought a crab for your mother. This summer I will see to it that she gets all that she needs. It is the least I can do, I who am dressed in Joseph's victory suit. Now I will go and ask Caroline to come out so that you two may make friends again."

He went in and laid the crab on the floor, where it woke from its unconscious state and began to stretch out its claws. Marie Le Donche blew up the fire under the great saucepan in which the water was almost on the boil already. Efflam walked over to Caroline, who was hunched up in a low chair. He took her hands away from her tear-stained face.

"Look at me. I am your brother," he said. "I am Joseph in his victory suit. Be happy and dry your tears and go out to your sister and dry her tears too!"

Caroline looked up at him perplexed, but went obediently out to Marie-Jeanne.

The older Marie had caught hold of the crab and with a determined expression on her broad, ugly face was pushing the creature down into the boiling water. Efflam watched her struggles. He saw her difficulty in getting the big, strong crab entirely covered and properly scalded. The crab fought angrily for its life with its long claws, and the woman pressed it down mercilessly with a long wooden spoon. She waited beside the now silent saucepan to see it come to the boil again. She said:

"We shall always find some way of paying the taxes, and my shawl for church is not the most necessary thing just now." After a pause she went on simply: "It's so important that Caroline should be happy."

"Yes," said Efflam with decision as he stood there, looking down into the saucepan. Then he moved back into the room and stood there with his hands in his pockets, and added, with the same decision as before: "And that Marie-Jeanne should be good."

The woman looked at him suspiciously, scrutinising him. At

that moment the two sisters entered, both smiling, both a little awkward. They went and kissed their mother, and she softened and took off her glasses to wipe away the steam. Then she left the bubbling saucepan and hastened to lay the table, saying:

"Don't go, Monsieur Efflam! It's four o'clock and we have not yet eaten. Neither have you, I'm sure. Stay with us, stay! Sit down. Marie-Jeanne, where are the tumblers, our best tumblers? And fetch my bottle of Negrita. I want to offer Monsieur a drop of rum to begin with."

They all drank rum, the guest from a large old tumbler with a foot, which in spite of his protests was filled to the brim. He sat with his eyelashes shading his cheeks, which were still hollow, making his eagle nose seem more imposing than ever. The strong drink warmed him and filled him with a beneficial calm. He was unwillingly recalled to the present and looked around at the three women with their clouded eyes. Then he rose without having tasted the food in front of him.

The great crab now lay again in the middle of the room, steaming and hot, and a deep red. Marie Le Donche had laid it on the clay floor and she asked her youngest daughter to carry it outside to cool off. The young Caroline was as happy as a child and too fearless and eager for amusement to obey at once. She sat there, swinging her feet, looking at her yellow leather shoes and smiling at Efflam.

"Tell me," she said, "is it really true that you can turn a crab into a dragon?"

He turned to her, smiling, but so absently that the girl grew serious and wondered if he saw her at all. Uncertainly she repeated her question: "Is it true that you can turn a crab into a dragon?"

"Yes, but only for you because you are so innocent, and witches into angels, too; that is why I have come."

"Oh, what did he mean by that?" Caroline burst out after he had gone, for at that moment he went away.

"I know what he meant," said Marie-Jeanne thoughtfully from her work-table near the window. She also looked after him as he went away. "I know what he meant," said she in a low voice, looking down at her work. "The most important thing of all is to be good, and I," she continued in a lower voice still, almost to

herself, "I must always be kind to Caroline. I will ask the holy saints to make me good."

When she looked up again he was no longer visible, and she turned her gaze towards her work while an inward smile illuminated her face. She thought that at this moment he was as unreal as a dream. A heavenly dream: a dream about the good.

In Marie-Suzette's house there was a sort of festive feeling like that on the eve of a Saint's Day. The daughters were all dressed up. There were big bunches of dark red camellias everywhere, on the table, the chimney-piece and on the radio. The little girls ran about holding a branch of the magnificent flowers in one hand and a pancake in the other. Two of the sons-in-law were at home; one of them, Yves Buanic, had come rumbling into the street in his lorry, full of camellias from inland. As usual on Saturday, the outer walls of the house were decorated with Le Lay's many large nets.

The family were now collected, and Guillaume asked for news from sea and land. The luck of his fisherman son-in-law had not been great, and everyone grumbled about it and discussed the possible reasons. They agreed that last week the weather had been too bad and this week it had been too good. The old proverb about the mackerel still held good. 'In the moonshine I hide myself; I like the sea when it dances and the wind when it blows restlessly.' But the sea had not danced, it had been indolent and it had been caressed by the glitter of the moon.

"It was not only that," said Le Lay, "we had bad luck too. That night the others had the best fishing, we were down with engine trouble and had to be towed into Concarneau. So away went all that profit. Before that we had bad luck with Lescantin's son, who fell and hurt himself, and had to be brought ashore. The *Cormorant* is having a spell of bad luck."

This last sentence penetrated through the smoke and the smell of cooking to mother-in-law, Marie-Suzette, who had taken the shutter off the opening to the old stove and had lighted the fire on the low hearthstone down on the floor. Now she was making pancakes as wide as a round table and as thin as a confirmation handkerchief. Her voice was heard coming out of the fumes:

"Listen to me, Marcel! If your luck is against you on the *Cormorant* you should take Monsieur Efflam with you. Then the fish would be sure to come back."

"Would he attract the fish? Ha ha! What logic is there in that, Mother-in-law?" laughed the broad Yves Buanic, and emptied his glass. Le Lay snorted.

"That Count! That Prince! What is there he can't attract, especially women! Oh no, I'm not superstitious. But I do need a man, as the Lescantin boy has been taken to hospital." The fisherman finished abruptly, and he also emptied his glass and banged it back on the table.

His wife, Marie-Louse, was standing at the door with her crochet and thread. She looked more bloomingly exuberant than ever in her costly costume, and obligingly showed off her grandeur to all who passed while she listened to the talk in the kitchen. Now she announced to the company at large:

"Here he comes!"

Her husband saw her wave coquettishly to the red figure who was approaching between the houses, and jealousy surged up in him. But he clenched his teeth and was silent. Yves, the lorry-driver, moved so eagerly where he sat that the light chair under him creaked. He was the powerful, Romance type with the square face and bent nose.

"So he's coming at last," he burst out. "That's good! Now you must let me make my observations, for I haven't seen him since he began to get up. I shall be surprised if I cannot decide exactly where he comes from. I have been everywhere, not just in the harbours, like you sailors, but everywhere I have seen types and heard dialects, believe me. All Frenchmen aren't alike. No, you must not imagine that all Breton women are as broad and round as the women in Kervily. In the Saint-Gilda's district, for example, the women are thin and sharp like the Scotch. The men are the same. One just has to go to work logically . . . let the boy come, and I'll soon solve the problem of his origin."

"Papa can do it, Papa knows everything!" sang Eliane, and danced round the table with a camellia in her hair.

"Papa knows much," said Marie-Pierre from her corner, "but he doesn't know everything. You will remember that time, Yves, when we were going to get engaged and you could not find Kervily,

but went over the whole of Brittany searching for it. No, no human being knows everything. But Efflam knows everything. I have discovered that. He knows in advance what is going to happen."

"Yes, because he is one of those sea-*paôtres*," said Rose lightly, and she also waved to the one about whom they were speaking. He shone in the afternoon sunshine as he approached, and little Eliane stopped in the middle of a turn-about and shouted in childish delight as she stretched out her arms towards their guest: "

"No, Auntie Rose, he's not what you say, he's a Prince!" and she ran towards Efflam, who bent down and kissed her on the cheek. Thereupon he bowed to all of them.

"Good-evening, Mesdames, Messieurs!"

Guillaume had caught the Saturday intoxication and was therefore more easily moved than usual. He stretched out his horny hands and shouted:

"Good-evening, my friend Efflam! How are you? Come and sit down. Come and have a glass of rum. Madame!" he said, looking towards the fumes round the frying-pan, and feeling more courageous as he shook the empty bottle. "Madame, Efflam is here and the bottle is empty, what shall I offer him?"

Marie-Suzette emerged from the fumes and straightened her back. To the great disappointment of her husband and sons-in-law she declared:

"We will not open a new bottle of Negrita to day. Monsieur Efflam shall have a glass of cognac. Fetch the bottle, Rose!"

The bottle of old cognac was brought to her, and she poured out the one glass and carried it to Efflam, followed by the longing glances of all the men. When the young man took the glass and drank it down they watched him in a friendly and interested way. Guillaume shared the drink with such intense imagination that he smacked his tongue in the other's place. When Efflam put down the empty glass on the table, the old man took it up and smelt it greedily.

"Yes, that was good," he confirmed, "that's good stuff. It's good for you, my friend."

Marie-Pierre put aside her crocheting and helped her mother bring the food to the table: two heaped-up dishes of pancakes

and a dish on which a tub of butter had been turned upside-down so that the large round mound of butter shone splendidly with its untouched top decorated with leaves and stars. The 'Alsace wreath', the large egg cake cut into thick pieces, shone almost as yellow. Here and there on the table there were bottles of white wine.

Guillaume drew Efflam down beside him. While Marie-Suzette, with clumsy decision, tossed some of the big pancakes on to the boy's plate, the old man stuck his fork into the other dish and slowly and methodically lifted the one pancake after the other on to Efflam's plate. Efflam himself was quite unconscious of all this. For the second time this afternoon he had been warmed by a strong, pure drink. Empty as he was, the alcohol had gone straight to his head and made him listless. He looked around the room, wondering what it was that made it seem so different until he saw the red bunches of camellias glowing in the half-darkness. While the others were eating their pancakes and butter with a healthy appetite, he asked:

"Is it Marie-Pierre who has picked all these flowers?"

"Marie-Pierre, Marie-Pierre!" cried everyone in surprise, as if they could not imagine that sluggish old sit-at-home picking flowers. The lorry-driver laughed loudly between his mouthfuls of pancake.

"Ha, ha, is that the way the boy talks? No, I can't say yet where that Frenchman comes from. I must hear more. Marie-Pierre, did he say? Why do you think that? What grounds have you for that supposition? I am interested in logic, you see, Efflam, Monsieur Efflam." Buanic stepped. Then he strengthened himself with some more pancakes, and went on:

"I will keep myself to logic. Everything in the world is built on logic. Or at any rate, it should be so. Now I should like to know: how have you come to the conclusion that my wife picked these camellias? Have you seen Madame picking flowers? Are there camellias here in the neighbourhood? Has she been further from home than to the laundry-table and the wash-tub? No, Madame does not pick flowers. She receives flowers from her monsieur. That is what happens, my boy. She gets more flowers than any other woman in this village. Whenever I come off a long journey I bring her something or other, and also for my

little girls. But flowers for the lady. And this also has its logical explanation. I met her on a train between Redon and Vannes. It was in November, 1937. Third class—we sat in a compartment for non-smokers—yes, for I do not smoke, my boy. As a motor-driver I do not smoke. Her father was there too, and he wasn't smoking either, for he had been ill. Yes, that's true, isn't it; Father-in-law, you were there. You were coming from Lisieux. I had been in Vannes. We became acquainted and we shared our food——"

"Oh, how pleasant it was, Yves," put in Marie-Pierre enthusiastically. "You gave us sausage, real Arles *sausage*, and you tasted our liver paste. And then Papa had a drink from your bottle of brandy. Oh, that was the beginning, but later on you could not find Kervily."

"Oh well! I found it in the end. I have found it more than once. Am I not sitting here to-day? Am I not the father of two little Kervily girls? I did not, of course, find it easily and at once when I came to get engaged to you as we had arranged on the train, but that has its own explanation. None of you mentioned anything but Kervily, and I myself was too busy with love to get more particulars about the address, and there are many Kervilys in Brittany. And I was less experienced then than I am now. Otherwise I should have been able to guess from Marie-Pierre's round body and broad face that she was from these parts. As a matter of fact, you were not so fat then, nor did I know the dialect so well, but I set off in any case and went round to all the Kervily villages. This one lay farthest away, therefore I came to it last. That is well figured out, isn't it? But I have not yet had an answer to my question, Monsieur Efflam Kelou. You see, I'm not going to give up, I'm going to persevere until I reach my goal. Why should Madame Buanic have picked the camellias? I asked you for an explanation. I want to know——"

"Do be quiet for a moment, Yves!" Rose burst in. "How can you expect him to answer if you go on chattering like that? Well, we've got the parrot at home again now. That's obvious." She rose and made a face at Efflam as she passed him, and then she went out and climbed on to the wall, from whence her more than usually high coif rose up and shone in rivalry to her mustard-coloured apron and fichu.

Guillaume slapped Efflam on the back and said: "My dear friend, my dear Efflam, you're not eating. Taste Madame's pancakes and the Alsace cake. Here, take some butter."

Efflam looked down at his forgotten plate with its mountain of pancakes as thin as parchment and as tough as rubber, becoming tougher and tougher the colder they grew. Odile sat on the floor, playing with one, folding it up and then opening the folds until she could hold it up like a fan and play hide-and-seek behind it. Efflam did as the others: put down his fork and ate the butter-covered, rolled-up pancake with his fingers. He chewed and swallowed patiently, his thoughts in quite another direction. Fixing his gaze on Yves Buanic, he asked him politely:

"To which Kervily did you drive first, Monsieur?"

"To which?" the other began with renewed fervour. "Why, I am not quite sure. When one acts with logical sequence all is well. I had to find her. But it was not enough to find the village, I had to go round and ask whether there was a family called Garrec living in the village, and there are others of that name living in other villages as well as here, and when that happened I had to ask to look at all the young girls."

"Like the prince in my book," shouted Bernadette. "Papa was like the prince who went round and round looking for Cinderella. He looked at all the young girls. But it wasn't Efflam, it was a real prince with a crown on his head."

"Efflam is a real prince," said Eliane reproachfully. "He has a crown, but he's hidden it. Haven't you, Efflam, you've only hidden your crown?" She went to him where he sat on his chair pushed back a little from the table. He looked up, thought for a moment, and then said, as if he had been thinking aloud:

"It's hidden, yes. It has such sharp thorns."

There was a strained, rather depressed silence, until Eliane's childish voice rose high and warm:

"But the slipper, Efflam? Hadn't you the slipper too? The one that was to fit on Cinderella's foot?"

Efflam again lifted his heavy eyelids, the painful expression disappeared, and he smiled broadly all round the table, stopping when he reached Buanic, whose powerful jaws were still munching.

"No, Eliane," he said, "it was your father who had the slipper and who went round looking for Marie-Pierre's little foot."

He looked down and they all looked down at the foot of which they were speaking, and Marie-Pierre held it out for them all to see, herself gazing at it with admiration, this foot in its check felt slipper. Her coal-black eyes shone as she looked towards her husband.

"Had you a slipper, Yves? Just imagine, I have forgotten it: Oh, how could I have forgotten? Did I try it on? Did it fit me? Did it fit?"

"No, I don't remember anything about the slipper!" laughed the man loudly. "No, that I don't remember. For myself I suppose I had boots on my feet. What logic would there have been in that?"

"Oh," exclaimed Le Lay, "surely you must have had a slipper."

"Well, I never," cried Marie-Pierre, "and you have forgotten all about it." Her husband slapped his head. He pushed the plate away from him, licked his mouth, smoothed his hair, straightened his collar.

"Oh, Papa, how could you forget the slipper!" shrieked Bernadette and Eliane almost simultaneously.

"Nonsense, nonsense," said their father, defending himself from their violent embraces. "Now that you're talking about it, I can remember it. Yes, yes, I had a slipper, a red—no, a silver one, it was—one of those slippers with high, narrow heels and many narrow bands and straps. Yes, a fine, pretty slipper it was, I can tell you. Do you remember it, Marie-Pierre?"

"Ah, yes," she sighed enthusiastically. "Ah, yes, it was fine and it was pretty. I shall never again have such a slipper. But was there only one, Yves? Was there only one slipper, Efflam?"

"There was only one slipper," answered Efflam very definitely.

"Yes, yes, quite right," said Buanic, "there was only one slipper. No doubt there was logic in that too, but—I have really forgotten the argument. Strangely enough I have never before reached my destination without driving there along the straight road. But I remember the slipper, the silver slipper, yes, with its fine, narrow straps."

"What happened to it, Yves?" asked Marie-Pierre. "What did we do with it?"

He stroked his chin—"Pouff, how do I know! I gave it to you. You ought to know."

She looked pleadingly at Efflam. "Where did my silver slipper get to, Efflam? Why haven't I got it any longer?"

"You have it, Marie-Pierre, it is here in the house."

"Just imagine that. It is still in the house. My silver slipper, it is still here!" It seemed as if her home had taken on a new meaning for Marie-Pierre. She looked round all the walls, and the two girls danced about to a new refrain.

"We have a silver slipper in the house; there is a silver slipper in our house . . ."

Marie-Louise went out again and stood by the door. Now and again she glanced at Efflam, whose chair had been moved forward into the light by the door. He sat with one elbow on his knee and his chin resting on his hand. His meal of pancakes lay heavy on his stomach, and the tepid white wine had made him feel sick, so that he was pale and preoccupied. Marie-Louise chattered, full of gossip, in a low voice, her face turned towards the kitchen.

"There goes Amélie Jegou. She's wearing her fur cape. She's looking this way, she always looks this way. I know who she wants to see. The Jegous are only waiting to take Efflam from us. But baking is hard work. I have lighter work for you, Efflam. Do you hear what I'm saying? Marcel has not had time to cut up kindling for me. When he's gone you must come and help me, Efflam." She blinked and flirted, and her husband looked on jealously. He had sat the whole evening feeling that there was something hanging over him that he must do, something that vexed him greatly, but which he thought he might be able to keep at bay. Now he jumped up suddenly and grasped at it as a protection, as a revenge, as something which he himself had decided upon. Shortly and violently, so that the young man at the door looked up, he burst out:

"Efflam Kelou, I'm short of a man in my boat. Will you take his place and come with us to-morrow?"

There was silence. Finally Guillaume said lamely:

"But the enrolment, Marcel—you cannot get him enrolled before to-morrow."

"Oh, we'll clear that up afterwards if he shows himself to be a fisherman. He can come with us on trial. Do you agree, Kelou?"

"When must I be on board?" asked Efflam.

"In the afternoon," answered the *patron*. He got up and stood there self-consciously, looking askance at his wife. Then he caught hold of a button of Efflam's coat between his blunt, black-nailed fingers, and pulled it as he said: "And see that you're wearing something warmer than this. A blouse like a proper fisherman. It's happened before that the fishing tackle has got twisted round a button like that and dragged a man overboard. Come along, Marie-Louise, we must get home."

"There's no hurry. Look, there come Blanche and Gérard. Blanche has also got her Saturday clothes on. I'll go with her and Maman to Vespers. It's such a lovely evening."

The carpenter's wife, Blanche, was as fair as her name, and as strong and blooming as Marie-Louise, but less thick-set. When she had gone off with the other women to the chapel her husband, Gérard Kér-laérec, came in to the men, greeted them, and was handed his glass of wine. He was a man in the forties, long and slim and with a little round face which had retained its boyish softness. He was more considerate and silent than anyone else, and when he was in company he said very little. He held out his hand to Efflam also, and the latter rose. Half turned towards Guillaume, the carpenter said:

"I have been thinking that perhaps Monsieur Kelou would like to come to me as an apprentice and learn the carpentering trade. Only, of course, if he does not go into the bakery. For I am told that you are going to begin work with the Jegous."

"No, he's not," said Le Lay. "He's coming out on the *Cormorant* with me."

"Oh, well then—excuse me, I did not wish in any way to . . ." Kér-laérec bowed and excused himself, and felt in all his pockets with hands on which many fingers were only stumps, and at last found his cigarettes and offered them round. He held a packet in front of Efflam, but the latter looked past them, staring only at the hand that offered them.

"I have known someone with hands like yours, Monsieur Kér-laérec. I noticed them when you shook hands. Your hands are different from those of the farmers and seamen. They are different from Monsieur Buanic's."

"My first finger also is nothing but a stump," said Buanic.

"It's not only that," came the answer in a definite tone of voice.

The carpenter looked at his hands in a perplexed sort of way. In spite of the injuries, it was quite evident that they were from quite a different district to those of the others, thinner and longer, something like Efflam's own. He seemed awkward and shy when he followed his father-in-law and his two brothers-in-law out of the house to stand about outside the shop, where other fathers and sons from the neighbourhood joined them to discuss the weather and listen to a bit of gossip.

It was a singularly lovely evening in Kervily. The arrival of the carpenter had dragged Efflam up out of his lethargy, and he set out for a ramble. While the Angelus sounded from Tréoultré he walked down the street and down the next little street and the next again. He soon reached the path along the old stone wall where he and Marie-Jeanne had walked the first day he had been allowed out. The sun hung large and yellow over La Joie, but it was soon covered over by veils of purple and red until it sank between a couple of small fishermen's houses over by the chapel. After that the different houses stood out solitary and dark under the shining evening sky.

Efflam went on across the grassland. Far beyond the sandy flats lay the houses of Tréneur, like a flock of sea-gulls. The moon seemed to rise from that direction, spilling its restless glitter on the water in the South Bay. Efflam himself seemed to be carried along his path in the same way as was the heavenly orb, which rose and sank while the sea rose and was sucked out in the rise and fall of the changing tide.

He wandered round the meadows, where the frogs' chorus which never ceased sounded from the green, limy depth of the pools. But the paths vanished under his feet, and he finally reached the highway. Here, exactly between Tréoultré and Kervily, stood the roadside crucifix with the great figure of the Saviour clearly lit by the moon. He turned and went towards his own village, again in his sleep-walking condition.

The moon was now already high in the heavens. It floated in a cloud-free space, sailing through a dark blue, heavenly channel, surrounded by a many-coloured ring of humidity. The air

was as mild as summer and yet clear. Down in the meadows the wading birds called to each other with the melancholy of spring—longingly. But through the stillness which held sway was heard a booming from the direction of La Joie, a strange, remote sound. Efflam walked rhythmically. Now again he felt the presence of Him who walked upon the sea. He noticed the wings that swept heaven and earth. The power that filled all things was here. It was in him.

Marie-Jeanne had scolded and been scolded. She had made others cry and been made to cry herself. She had laughed and felt happy and she had dreamt of absolute goodness. Now she was arranging dark red camellias in front of her statue of St. Theresa—the flowers that her cousin's husband had brought and had divided out among them all so generously. She saw her mother go off to Vespers in a clean, starched Saturday coif and a black shawl. She saw Caroline take her new bicycle and go out, radiant in her yellow shoes, her green frock and new red coat. She herself also went out and felt that the air was as mild as on a summer's day. It was very still and the spring birds cried to each other. But why was the sea roaring beyond La Joie? This far-away roaring was not the surf, it was the sea itself. "O Our Lady of Joy, O Holy Virgin Mother," she prayed, and put her hand against her beating heart. "Why is the sea beyond La Joie roaring when all else is so silent? I am anxious. Do not take him from me! Do not let anything happen to him!"

The lighthouse sent out its beams of light at regular intervals over sea and land, restless, but reassuring at the same time. How high the moon sailed in the blue sky which was almost black! It was surrounded by a great ring of colour. That might mean a storm.

Marie-Jeanne wept, standing there by the door of her home. On such an evening as this she longed to be out with other young people. She had put on her best clothes, and she also would have liked to go to the picture-house in Tréoultré, but somehow it would have seemed more suitable for her to go with her mother to Vespers. She must pray all the more at home. She would pray for him, because her heart was anxious, for he was threatened by dangers.

CHAPTER SIX

THE DAYS PASSED, and Marie-Jeanne prayed her prayers to St. Theresa, with the dark red camellias. The flowers themselves faded, but the leaves did not drop. They crept into themselves, extinguished, lifeless. "O St. Teresa, Efflam is out on the *Cormorant*—Efflam, my friend, my child, is out on the great sea, the sea which was once so cruel—no, the sea which gave him to me." Her tears ran more and more freely, both from anxiety and joy. "O Our Lady of Joy, give me the happiness of seeing him again."

Monday came with fog. Marie-Jeanne went out with a sack and collected green stuff for the rabbits, and she felt as if she herself, with the power in her own lungs, ought to blow away the thick wall of fog. Now she began to see where the sun was—a large, grey ring of steel in the centre of the fog. When she went out at midday again, she saw it shining, a poisonous, sulphur yellow. Neighbour Tanneau comforted her by saying that it was only a land fog and that out at sea it might well be blazing sunshine.

In the afternoon the sun was the colour of blood as it stood between the lighthouse and La Joie. She went all the way out to the chapel for Vespers. On her way home, when her legs were tired and her hip hurt more than usual, she gazed at the blood-red sign in the sky. People were still working out there on the ploughed lands, where the church path wound with many turnings from field to field. They grew large in the mist, these people with their spades and pick-axes. They looked like giants when seen in the grey veiling of the mist.

"They have taken my friend from me, my friend is on the sea. O Holy Joseph, most tender of foster fathers, strengthen and comfort my friend."

She looked around her again, and it seemed to her that the sun, however unnaturally red, shone with great splendour and had almost vanquished the mist. Perhaps, as the neighbour had said, it was shining from a clear sky out there at sea.

On Tuesday it was clear sunshine; a fresh breeze had swept away the mists of the day before. Marie Jeanne sat out of doors, working in the shelter of the stone wall. She looked absent-

minedly at her fellow-workers, where they sat in small groups between the houses, low upon the ground as she did herself, seeking shelter where shelter was to be found. She noticed that, in spite of the wind, there was a great deal of dampness in the air. And hardly had she eaten her midday meal with her mother and sister and settled herself outside again before a light mist drifted in between her and the houses round her. It swept out over the fields and settled there like a shimmering, pearl-grey drizzle, through which the boats on the edge of the sandhills looked like dark, bleared patches. She shivered and drew her shawl more closely round her as a protection against this raw mist-smoke from the sea.

And then suddenly the wind rose and the mist turned into real rain. Marie-Jeanne held her shawl together with one hand while she collected her crochet-hook and thread in the other and hurried indoors. She had no sooner settled herself at her work-table than the rain stopped and the sun's rays appeared again over the edge of a cloud. But the wind whistled in the chimney--its force was increasing.

"O St. Teresa," she whispered, "why are the flowers closing up? They are like my heart, they do not dare to open, they cannot, they must not. They withdraw themselves into themselves and die before they have really burst into full bloom."

Her mother came in and firmly shut the outer door. The sound struck Marie-Jeanne like a blow. Maman is expecting a storm, she thought.

"Where is the wind coming from?" she asked, and she sounded almost happy in her agitation, but her hands were trembling.

"From the north-west. The sea is booming among the rocks of Saint-Fiacre. The tide is very high these days, that's why the sea is so restless. The mist is drifting in over the land again. Shut the window, daughter."

The sea mist rose again and spread like close, grey rain along the ground; the village itself disappeared in the ice-cold haze. The wind increased, and the booming along the invisible shore became stronger than ever.

Marie-Jeanne counted all the hours of the twenty-four and tried in this way to make the time go faster. It was full moon, it was the vernal equinox, and the tide was more violent than ever; but

let the days pass, let the moon go by with its great, cold face. But, oh, let it grow calmer, smoother. Let him keep well, strong, happy! She gave a little sob when she remembered how little he cared about his own health, but what other blessing could she ask for him? He who was all goodness, who was goodness itself. Yes, she could pray that others should be good to him. . . .

She tried to hurry on the time, but it was only Wednesday. The night had so many hours. Marie-Jeanne saw that one of the fishing-boats of the village had returned. She stood on the steps, wrapped in her grey, everyday shawl, while her mother talked over the wall with the man from the boat. He shouted into the wind:

"Yes, there was a pretty heavy sea, the boat was rolling, I can tell you. And no catch to speak of, a couple of ton between twelve men. But it might have been worse, there are others out there who have done much worse. Wait a minute, Marie, I've got a nice, fat mackerel for you, at any rate."

The smell of cooking mackerel filled the room, and Caroline laid the table happily. But the food stuck in her elder sister's throat. Marie Le Donche told her to eat more, and added:

"My girl, you are pale to-night. Is your hip painful? Are you feeling the bad weather in your back? Tanneau has just told me that the beams from the lighthouse are still red. That means, of course that the unsettled weather has not yet passed."

Marie-Jeanne took up her work again, measured glove against glove and paired them off, laying them in the boxes, even, firm, with well-pressed fingers and cuffs—until instead of white and black and beige balls of thread there lay white and black and beige-coloured summer gloves in all the blue boxes. Her hands worked automatically, and her body was not conscious that it grew tired by remaining in the same position hour after hour, day after day. But her mother had spoken of backs and hips—"Maman thinks that I have nothing but backs and hips," thought the young girl. "She never imagines that I may also have a wounded heart."

Thursday—the day on which Our Blessed Lord was betrayed. "Oh, my friend, my friend, what is happening to you out on the boundless ocean? How are they treating you? Merciful St. Anne, take care of my protégé!" The wind was still strong from the

north-west, and neither Tanneau nor any of the other fishermen who had returned contemplated going out again while the weather remained so rough. He, their neighbour, went out on the beach at low tide and collected thick *palourds* and big, round, half-moon mother-of-pearl shells. Marie-Jeanne saw him returning through the thick curtain of rain, wet to the skin.

"The north-west is heavy," he shouted, "but here in the south side I managed to get hold of these. But it was dangerous, dangerous, even shore-fishing is dangerous in this sort of weather. Look here, catch, *bon appétit!*" He emptied his basket with the heavy, rattling shell-fish and went on home.

They ate cockles, salt and fresh from the sea, the sand crackling between their teeth while they prised out the tough little creatures and dipped their bread into the juice which ran down into the plate. Marie-Jeanne's tears fell, but no one noticed them in the half-darkness, lighted only by a smoking candle-stump. They ran down her cheeks, mixing with the sea-water on her plate. The weather roared like a waterfall outside, and in spite of the closed windows the rain seeped in and ran out over the floor. The storm tugged at the door and shutters.

Afterwards she helped Caroline to clean the large shells, which were so weather-beaten on the outside, but shimmering with mother-of-pearl inside. Marie Le Donche said:

"Look carefully, dear children. You may find a pearl in any of those shells. When I was a young girl I found one. It was just before I became engaged to your father. Since then—never again."

• Marie-Jeanne hunted in the half-darkness, for the storm had already damaged the electric current. She felt for the pearl with her sensitive fingers. 'If I find a pearl all will be well,' she thought. 'If I find a pearl all will be well; and I will give it to charity.'

Friday—still storms, still rain and driving mist. 'It was on a Friday He was crucified,' thought Marie-Jeanne. 'Friday is a bad day.' Scarcely had she thought this before she became conscious of the rumour, that rumour which more quickly and noiselessly than any other sweeps through a fishing village: 'A boat has been wrecked at dawn on the southern reefs outside the bay.' The sea rode as high as ever, bits of wreckage had been washed ashore,

and in this way the number and name of the boat were known. Twelve men would not return to their homes.

Marie-Jeanne fought her way through the storm down the main street. She stood still at the corner, leaning against the pressure of the wind as if against a wall which would not yield—until quite unexpectedly it gave way and she almost fell back. With the water swishing in her wooden shoes and her cheeks shining red from the wind, she reached the Garrecs' house. She had some purchases to make in the shop and went in there first, but she heard voices from the kitchen.

Marie-Louise was sitting there as if glued to her chair, unkempt, her plaited hair hanging down her back. Her mother looked at her, displeased, and spoke sternly:

"The *Cormorant* is sure to get through, *he* is on board. The sea has already taken its toll for this time. You should not be sitting there, swearing and crying. You should get yourself children to look after. You cannot always go around with Odile. You ought to have children of your own. That would give you something to think about. It's not normal that you should not be feeding children at your age."

Marie-Louise went on crying. Her weeping was like a heavy squall and was as quickly over, giving place to bitter grimaces.

"No," she said, "Marcel would also like to have children again, but I don't want any more. I only have boys, and in our family the boys never live. Can I ever forget my Louis when he was carried home from the harbour—like a rag doll without life? And little Guillaume—of whom there was nothing left to lay in the grave, for what we found was nothing but some strips of cloth. The mine had blown him into the air and nothingness——"

"Silence," scolded Marie-Suzette, "silence, you talk too much. Haven't I myself lost children, but I have obeyed the commands of God and nature and given birth again . . . I have not, like you, let it deteriorate into wantonness and lust."

"Oh, how you talk, Maman! You're old-fashioned in your ideas. Oh, Maman . . ." Marie-Louise began to sob again, but more quietly and deeply, while she spoke. "Am I unfaithful when Marcel is away at sea? Have I ever been so?—Answer me! You say *he* is with them, as if that were any good. I don't think it will improve matters. Efflam is no sailor, he will be of no use on

board. Marcel ought never to have taken him with them. It was only from jealousy that he did so. He grudged me having my little joke and enjoying myself. Marie-Jeanne is standing there in the shop door. Why don't you come in, Marie-Jeanne? Have you heard any news from the sea? Has any more information come through?"

The girl shook her head, sat down and took out her crocheting.

It was Saturday. The storm had spent itself and the sun shone on an ocean which, it seemed to Marie-Jeanne, showed a guilty conscience with its greenish-yellow ground swell, and its pretence at a placid face. But out there, beyond the dark surface of the rocks, where, but for the white ridge of foam, no danger would be apparent—a ridge of foam which in stormy weather was well hidden by all the other countless bands of white foam—there the fishing-boat had split up and there this lazily rolling sea had taken its prey. Brooding, the girl returned home with the rabbit food she had collected, dragging the sack behind her as wearily as she dragged her poor leg. Her sabots sank down into the mud, for it was wet everywhere. The rain-water had flooded the fields by the shore and destroyed most of the fodder for the cows. Her eyes were, however, satisfied when she saw strong freshly green shoots among the washed-up seaweed. The young shoots of wheat on either side of the path were already two inches high and were growing even and thick.

Suddenly she drew herself up and remained standing motionless, listening with her whole being. Faintly, faintly she heard a far-away thudding. It was not the cliffs at Saint-Pierre, it was not the breakers at La Joie. Nor was it the waves beating against the sandy beach between Kervily and Trémour. It was something else.

The thudding increased while she listened, and simultaneously her face was lightened by a waking hope.

Now—now she distinguished the throbbing. It was the throb of a motor. It was the fishing fleet on its way home. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, Our Lady of Joy—pray for us sinners."

She caught hold of the sack and hurried homeward, flying along on light feet as if she were not hindered by any deformity.

The afternoon came and the village was again decked out as if for a feast day with its large, brown butterflies and its veils in transparent green-blues. There was a subdued feeling of relief and a thankfulness everywhere, which could never turn into real joy. The bits of wreckage lay there on the shore, and a watch was still kept in case the sea restored the dead.

Marie-Jeanne hastened down to the harbour. A number of boats were already anchored inside the breakwater. Groups of men were laying-to by the pier with the help of other boats and jollies. Some were loosening the boxes and baskets of fish. The big hand-carts were on their way to the buyers who were waiting. But the catches were meagre and nowhere did they compensate for the loss in damage to the boats and equipment.

Marie Jeanne clung to the stone edge of the jetty and stretched out her neck to look. Had the *Cormorant* come in yet? Was it one of the boats out there? Oh, perhaps, perhaps. It was difficult to see at this distance and among such a large crowd of bigger and smaller vessels, but she thought that one of them bore the blue and yellow colours of the *Cormorant*. If that was so, the crew must already have come ashore. If so, *he* would have got home a long time ago.

She loosened her fingers from the stone edge and hastened away, hindered and delayed, she thought in her impatience by the many who came and went on the crowded jetty. It was almost as crowded on land. The fish auction was in full swing and everyone—purchasers, owners and onlookers—moved from cart to cart. The women came with enamelled dishes under their arms to fetch their fish for dinner. The factory sirens had sounded before even the fishing fleet had reached harbour, drawing the workers as by a magnet to the big gates. At last she had passed all this and reached the main street, where there is also much traffic, but where she could walk along quietly. Her feet were heavy again now, and she felt as if she made no progress. She also began to feel fear of the moment when she would see *him* again.

She saw the fisherman, Jehan Lescantin, and her mind formed the questions she wished to put to him. Suddenly he became aware of her, and then, to her surprise, he went hastily behind a wall as if he were avoiding her on purpose.

Marie Jeanne was right. Lescantin had purposely hidden him-

self behind the wall, and he remained there while the hunchbacked girl went past. He felt ashamed of himself, standing like that against a wall when there was no natural reason for it. And when he again emerged into the street he stared suspiciously at those he met as if he were afraid of their thoughts about him. The Garrec girl was happily far away down the street by now, and would in a moment turn off to the right into one of the small alleys. He somehow felt obliged to turn round and follow her with his eyes. How lame she was! Of all the lame girls in the village; she had the most difficulties. How her deformed little body swayed. How violently her high head-dress jerked from side to side as she walked. 'I ought to have let her speak to me,' thought Lescantin, and forgot his suspicions. But what could he have said? That the trip had gone well? That the trip had gone badly? Neither the one nor the other fitted exactly. And how could he have answered her question about *him*?

Could he have said: 'I know nothing about any Efflam, nothing about anyone else on board, scarcely anything about the fishing'? He knew in a vague sort of way that he had seen a person cowering here and there on deck, but he had avoided him, tried to look away from him. Just once, when he lay down in the crew's sleeping quarters, thinking he was alone, he had suddenly seen in the hammock opposite his own a pair of long, bony hands shining in the darkness. And he heard, while he felt himself stiffen and, as it were, die, the following words:

"Terrible was the cross upon which I hung. It reached up to the heavens above, its arms from east to west. And yet it was not enough. It was cut down, destroyed like a tree which must be cleared away. But its roots still grow and fill the dark chambers of the kingdom of the dead. No dead man rests in peace. The roots of the cross twine around them all and penetrate their intestines like worms. Oh, my father . . ."

Those were the words he had heard, and they had haunted him like two other sentences he had heard earlier: "Why do you doubt? Look at my hands." And now he knew what it meant: he was dead, spiritually dead, but he had no peace. The roots of the cross were boring their way into him. "Oh, if only I could come alive again, so that I could believe and have the courage to fulfil my vow. If only I had the courage and the faith to walk

in the procession at the next *Pardon* at La Joie." But he was dead, he was dead. Or rather, buried alive.

No, he, Lescantin, could not give any information as to how the stranger had behaved on board. He himself had managed badly, he thought.

Marie-Jeanne reached the Garrecs' house at last. Le Lay stood outside at the laundry-table, cleaning a platter of fish and talking to his father-in-law. Marie-Jeanne heard him say:

"It was a great mistake. He was frightened, and no good at all. But the worst was that the other men were frightened of him. Frightened of that weakling! They pretended nothing was the matter, but I saw what it was. Strangely enough, old Lescantin was the most off colour."

"Was he ill? Was he sea-sick?" asked Guillaume sympathetically.

"Sea-sick? I'm sure I don't know. I had no time to look after him. And besides——"

"Besides what, Son-in-law?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all. No, I won't have him with me any more. Some people are so constituted that they cannot allow themselves to be ordered about, and one has the feeling that——"

"That—that what, Son-in-law?"

"Oh, just nothing. Nothing at all. No, let him be a baker."

Guillaume went with Marie-Jeanne to his own door. Her heart stopped beating as she stepped over the threshold. It was so quiet in here. Everyone seemed to have disappeared, children as well as grown-ups. The many camellias from the preceding Saturday looked like crinkled-up black h-red, artificial flowers. The stiff green leaves were spotty and dusty.

No one sat at the big, round table. There was not even a fire in the stove. Guillaume showed her in with a movement of his hand and himself remained on the doorstep, fumbling with his tobacco.

Efflam lay on the bed. He was dressed in the old working trousers they had looked out for him and in the dark blue seaman's jersey he had been given to wear under his blou e. His face was turned away from her, she only saw the dishevelled hair and a cheek dark with long beard stubble.

"Efflam, my friend!" She was borne nearer to him by her

insuperable need to comfort and help. She had already lifted her hands to stroke his hair and forehead, and then he turned his head and raised his eyes towards her, and she stopped, remained standing without being able to touch the strangely expressionless face. Just as she, dispirited, thought that she would never learn to interpret what was behind those brown eyes, that she would never be allowed to establish any contact with him, he smiled, caught hold of her hands and kissed them—kissed the inside of the fingers themselves.

"My little mother," he said. "My little comforter."

"Oh, Efflam!" she burst out. She was sad as never before, unhappy to the very depth of her heart, she did not know why. Suddenly, she knew. She knew with merciless clarity. With a sigh which almost lifted her heart out of her breast, she turned and went to her Uncle Guillaume on the doorstep. The latter went on sucking a cigarette stump for a time without taking any notice of her. Then, without looking at her, he said:

"My child!"

"Who is he, Uncle?" she asked. Guillaume thoughtfully bit at his moustache and answered:

"A strange bird. A very strange bird."

Suddenly they both had the feeling that they were not alone. Efflam stood behind them in the kitchen. Marie-Jeanne's heart hammered, and Guillaume swallowed. As he stood there, barefoot on the coarse cement, in the washed-out, patched trousers and high-necked, knitted jersey, they felt as if they were gazing at a king's son in rags. Never before had he seemed to them more naturally proud in his bearing, never before so distinguished in in feature and in the way he held his head.

"Monsieur Efflam!" said Guillaume, and stepped aside to leave room should he want to go out.

"Efflam," whispered Marie-Jeanne and drew back. He gave a slight bow and went out between them, across the plank, up the street, beyond the corner. Not until then did the two on the threshold realise that he was barefoot. They looked at each other, saw his sabots inside the door, looked at the matted, damp tattered woollen socks hanging near the stove.

"Let him be, child. Let him be," said Guillaume mildly.

Efflam went straight across the village, across the main street and came out on the cultivated land on the west side. His feet left their mark on the rain-drenched ground and on the old paths, which had always been carefully preserved. He splashed through cold grass with water between the tussocks and waded across wide puddles of rain-water, white from flowering sea-pinks, which mingled a new, sweet scent with the many strong, salty smells of the sea-shore. At last he reached the beginning of the beach, and the small, coarse plants that grew there in the sand pricked his skin. He felt the mussel-shell everywhere as small, hard lumps.

While he was still in the main street, Efflam had noticed the turbid, yellowish-green ground swell with its white breakers, also slightly tinged with yellow. Now the roar of the sea filled his ears, and the dampness came right up against him. The tide was half-way out and many of the rocks lay uncovered.

He looked at it all, shut his eyes and looked again. Yes, there it lay, lifting itself farther and farther out of the sea, this unreal, brown landscape with the gloomy sarcophagus-like stones. It was here that he had opened his eyes when the sea gave him to this village. He pulled himself up at once—it was not the sea that gave him, but He who walked upon the sea and whose footsteps he heard even at this moment in the direction of Saint-Fiacre. Thudding, hard, as if there were anger in them. Efflam stretched out his arms towards the brown land of the ebb-tide and cried:

“My father, my father, I missed the way I should go. But see, my feet are on the earth again! I have come back to the shore ordained for me.”

With his head bowed, Efflam returned to the village. Everywhere in the paths and in the roads people looked at him as he walked bearded and barefoot, his trousers patched at the knees, in the worn-out jersey with darned elbows. He walked on silently, his head bent and without lifting his eyes, passing them as if he were a penitent.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE JEGOUS' SHOP resembled the Garreys'. Like almost all the other shops in Kervily, it sold all the necessities of life as well as various articles of clothing all jumbled together in an intimate

mixture. It had also a counter, and shelves for wine. It sold, however, one thing that none of the others kept: bread, the most necessary of them all. For this reason there were always customers in Jegous'.

Efflam Kelou was put to mixing dough and kneading the long loaves and the thick round ones. He had not yet a great deal of strength nor the knack of handling the dough, but every time the baker Jegou was about to lose his temper with him, his sister Amélie came into the bakery and asserted herself. She would put the tip of a finger into one of the rising breads and watch how the small depression puffed out again as if to detach itself entirely from her touch. Efflam also turned aside as he stood there in his apron of sacking and with flour dust all over him from head to foot. Then she would turn to her brother:

"Have patience, Henri. Are we not selling almost more than before? We have had a great many new customers since Monsieur Kelou came!"

"Yes, but look at his *baguettes*," grumbled her brother. "And see how his dough sticks!"

"Oh, have patience, Henri, one must not turn back half-way. How do you think yourself that you are getting on, Monsieur Kelou?"

The apprentice was working slowly, absent-mindedly, on a lump of dough. At length he answered tranquilly:

"This is not the sort of bread I have come to distribute."

Amélie's eyebrows shot up into her forehead. She looked questioningly over at her brother. The latter shrugged his shoulders. Then she asked cautiously, almost coaxingly:

"What do you mean by that, Monsieur?"

Efflam turned his head more slowly, he was slower than ever in his movements, for he was sleepy from the heat of the oven. He fixed his gaze on her and spoke with tired indifference:

"The big beam you have in your eye hinders you from seeing clearly."

Then he began again to work on his lump of dough.

"Nonsense," said Amélie Jegou resentfully, but she looked at him uncertainly, almost with fear. She remained standing there irresolute, perplexed as to what she should say or do next. Somewhat uncertainly, she said at last:

"Eflam, we want to help you. You fit in very well with us, with our rooms, with the big Breton cupboards and chests. Do you remember that you felt them with your fingers and said they were lovely? Otherwise you say so little. We—we want what is best for you, Monsieur Kelou."

He turned and stood with the over-kneaded, grey dough in his hands. "Let me go back to the Garrecs," he said. And the woman in front of him shivered again and laughed hysterically. Then she pulled herself together and said:

"I will ask Monsieur and Madame Garrec if you can move back to them."

"There is no need, because it is my home," he answered simply. Then Amélie Jegou could do nothing but laugh with trembling lips.

"As you wish, Monsieur Kelou."

"Thank you, Mademoiselle Amélie."

He laid down the dough on the table, took off his apron and hung it up, held out his hand to the baker and said:

"Good-bye, Monsieur Jegou."

He left the bakery, and as he went through the shop Amélie, on a sudden impulse, took the largest and best-looking loaf from the shelf and pushed it under his arm. She stood watching through the glass in the shop door how Eflam crossed the street. She saw Guillaume Garrec come towards him with outstretched arms.

"Oh, Eflam, my friend, my comrade!" shouted Guillaume. Marie-Suzette appeared in the doorway. Her long, tusk-like front tooth was pressed into her lip, and she looked towards the Jegous' with an expression of pride on her face. Then she lifted the top from the stove and began to arrange the wood. Eflam's eyes lighted up like those of an animal who has learnt to understand a definite sign. He became anxious and a little frightened, but said nothing. The daughter sitting under the attic stairs also understood the sign. She got up from her rather crouching position and asked:

"Shall I stir the batter, Maman?"

"Do so, Marie-Pierre, do so," said her mother. "Rose, go and fetch the bottle of old cognac from the cupboard. I expect Eflam has not tasted cognac while he has beer with those mean Jegous." She herself poured out some into the glass, and while she stood there, holding the bottle, her gnarled old face lighted up with a

dreamy smile. So he had come back to them after all, their mascot who brought them good luck.

The little girls stood with outstretched arms to take the rain of flowers which Buanic had brought back with him. The lorry again stood in the street, shutting out the light from the window, and the driver sat in the midst of his family, bragging about his experiences. The house was filled with large, light yellow, faintly-smelling primulas.

"I bought them from a street-seller," he yelled. "For I never come back to my wife without bringing her flowers. Not when I have been for a long trip up-country. Like that time in the train between Vannes and Redon . . . That time I had bought a branch of chrysanthemums from a poor clod-hopper on the station. And then—yes, what did I do but give them to the semi-young lady who happened to be sitting opposite me. You said you loved flowers. Yes, after that I have always brought you flowers, whether you loved them or not."

"Oh, Yves!" Marie-Pierre wriggled ecstatically. "How you talk, you who could not even find Kervily——"

"Oh, don't remind me of that again! Am I not sitting here now, am I not the father of two little Kervily girls? Marie-Pierre, Madame Buanic, take your flowers! Divide them out between saints and saintesses, between relations and neighbours. Everyone shall know that Monsieur Buanic has come home. Little girls, where are you? Have you found your mother's silver slipper?"

"No, because Prince Efflam has been away with the Jegous, and when he is not here no one can find it," piped Eliane.

"Oh, what a pity! But what logic! I am glad to see that you have inherited something from your father, Eliane. Happily *Monsieur le Prince* Efflam is home again, so it promises well—and only think that Prince Efflam should come carrying that loaf! A large loaf which no one was allowed to touch except that bad-tempered Marie Le Donche, who divided it up with her daughters. And it lasted them for a whole week. Isn't that so, Bernadette?"

"Yes, Papa, Efflam's bread lasted for a whole week. Perhaps there is some of it left still. Aunt Marie said it was a gift from heaven."

"Surely, and it will never come to an end. What a miracle loaf! No one can explain that sort of thing logically. Well, perhaps the most learned scientific men could do so, for there is no doubt an explanation for everything." Yves snorted and splashed water and soap-suds round about him as he stood washing off the oil and dust, naked to the waist, with a little light-blue enamelled star hanging on his hairy chest. Efflam's eyes remained fixed on the little medal.

"The Prince is looking at my star," said Yves, and, in the middle of washing as he was, he lifted the little medal to his lips and kissed it reverently. "It's from far away," he declared. "I fetched it myself from *Notre Dame de la Garde*, who stands on her cliff and keeps watch over the sinful town of Marseilles and over the sea. She is the patroness of seamen, but it suits me because a lorry like mine is nothing less than a ship."

"Monsieur, will you give me your little medal?" asked Efflam unexpectedly. Buanic compressed his lips and was silent for a moment, then he answered with unusual abruptness:

"Sorry, but I can't spare it." He took up the rough towel and began to talk as he rubbed himself, hoping to obliterate the unpleasant impression of having refused a request. "How nice it is to be home again," he shouted, "how I shall enjoy going to bed in the family bedroom. No, Marie-Pierre, why do you save so tremendously for a house of our own? You don't really want to get away from Maman's soup-kettle, do you? As for me, I like having the whole family round me. The whole family—oh, what a pity it is that your Corantin cannot come home more often, Rose! He really ought to be allowed to do so."

"Don't trouble your head about us," said the sister-in-law. And, with her ever-present desire to tease, she added: "Besides, I have my *paôtr*."

"*Paôtr, paôtr*," said the old mother grimly. "I don't want to hear any more of that sinful chatter."

"Now, about those ghost-*paotres*," began Buanic, while he put up the looking-glass for his shaving. "Away in my home district there were any number of them once upon a time. There were *paotres* who could transform themselves and show themselves to human beings as dogs and hares. Or even white bulls. They even took on the figures of human beings at a number of springs and

bridges. There was one that belonged to the Island of Quiberon. Perhaps that is the one that old Marie Le Gat spoke about. It was a boy, believe it or not, Rose, as beautiful as a statue and with a voice like music. When people wished to pass between the mainland and the island and were surprised by the tide, that pretty *paôtr* used to come and offer to carry them across. Anyone who was lured into mounting his back was lost. They were thrown down in the sea while the pretty youth shouted with laughter."

At this stage Buanic had to stop talking because of the razor, and the room became suddenly silent. Inevitably everyone turned to look at that very strange bird, who, after the refusal of his request, had sat there more silent than ever. Rose Galvez dared to joke with him.

"Is it you, my lovely big *paôtr*? Are you the famous Quiberon boy, and have you swum over here?"

"No," protested Eliane in a frightened voice. "He isn't that boy you're talking about because he never shouts with laughter. Efflam is a prince, a real prince, aren't you, Efflam?" She put both hands on his knees and lifted her long, narrow Breton eyes towards him anxiously, questioningly. He drew her to him by one of the two hard, fair plaits and said reassuringly:

"Eliane, you must not be afraid. You must never be afraid. Look at my forehead. You can feel the marks of the thorns." He took her hand and pressed it against his temple, where his skin beyond the hair-line still bore the scars of the wounds he had received in the sea and which the doctor had sewn up. She stretched herself on tiptoe between his knees so as to feel the marks.

"Efflam, Efflam, that is where your crown has been! I feel it. Oh, how glad I am! But——" gravity shadowed the happy face: "Why did it hurt so much? Why did it have so many thorns, Efflam?"

"It had to be so, Eliane," he said convincingly as before, as he carefully loosened her hand and held her away from him. "Real crowns always hurt, a king's crown most of all. Ask him when you next meet a king!"

"There are no more of them," sounded Bernadette's self-assured, big-sister voice. "Uncle Marcel has said that there are no more kings, that kings are finished."

"Not right, not right," said Buanic, who had now reached the after-treatment stage and was rubbing his face with perfumed oil. "That is not quite right. There is not always logic in brother-in-law Le Lay's talk."

"Are there any kings, Papa?" Eliane broke in urgently.

"There are. There are, child, just as certainly as there is a silver shoe hidden somewhere in this house." He stepped out into the light of the door, preening himself. "Now I am ready, Efflam, and I have a suggestion to make: come with me next time I go on a trip." He looked at the guest as if he were trying to make amends for his intractability. Efflam returned his gaze with eyes that expressed full reconciliation.

"Come with me," repeated Yves eagerly. "I'm going towards my own old home with a removal load. Anyone who likes lovely things should look at Brittany when the woods dance a gavotte along the roads and the flowers bloom for mile after mile. I'll teach you to be a motor driver. That is much better than being a baker."

Efflam rose and bowed. "Thank you for your kindness, Monsieur. When shall I meet you in the lorry?"

The other laughed heartily.

"There's alacrity for you. I'll let you know before I start the engine. Have you ever driven a car? No. You do not even know whether you used to walk on your two legs or fly on wings before you came to Kervily? Well, that doesn't matter, I shan't be ashamed of having a prince beside me in the lorry. Who knows, when we drive out together perhaps I shall find Marie-Pierre's other slipper!"

Laughing, he went off up the street.

The whole family stood in the doorway and waved, and the neighbours looked out of their doors and windows when the lorry drove off from the village. Buanic knew every child and every cat in the district, and he drove his high, heavy lorry with the carefulness with which he was endowed. And because of the skill with which he was also endowed he dared to let the broad, double wheels brush past the old walls within a hair-breadth without touching a stone of them. In the same careful and skilful manner he took the sharp corner by the Jegous' as he waved still another

heartily *kenavo* to the friends round about. Scarcely was he out on the asphalt main road before his third outstanding characteristic—boldness—took its turn. He increased his speed and let the lorry fly along while he took out a pointed match-stick and carefully cleaned his teeth. The sound of his horn was like a fanfare and urged even the larks to hurl themselves into the deep blue morning haze, dizzy with sunshine, singing and rejoicing to the full extent of their powers. It was so cold a morning that the old people had shaken their heads and said: "We shall have snow, we shall have snow", but the sun shone from a clear sky, and the sea down in the south bay was splendid in its blue and white. Buanic stopped at the petrol station in the near-by town and ordered his tanks to be filled up.

While the two men were waiting, they saw Dr. Guilcher, who immediately crossed the street to speak to them. Rumour had kept him informed of Efflam's doings, and he was curious to see how his patient was keeping.

"You look very well," he said, surprised. "And you have been to sea and even been through a big storm. You do not seem to have taken any harm from it."

"No, Doctor. I did not, but it harmed others."

"How was that?"

"I roused my father's anger, and he allowed the sea to storm and carry on in an evil way."

"Well, well! No doubt it is best for you to stay on land. How is your throat? I should like to examine you again, but I do not want you in my garden while my wife's lilies are in bloom. I shall never forget how you plundered my camellia bush. And where are you off to now?"

Yves cleared his throat and took the opportunity for which he had been waiting.

"To Carnac, Doctor. It's my old home. Prince Efflam is with me as my passenger. If I may, I should like to ask you a question: Do you think he would be any good in a lorry? Do you think that motor-driving would suit him? I think it's logical to obtain a doctor's opinion about a thing of that sort. Lorry-driving isn't child's play. A lorry like this one is like a ship."

"It is certainly almost like a ship, Monsieur," said Guilcher, and looked up at the lorry, in which Efflam had already taken

his place. "It's not a small thing to steer. But in answer to the question you have asked me—absolutely no. Do not let him take the wheel. Take him with you on your journeys, that will do him good, but don't try and make him into a lorry-driver."

"Thank you, Doctor. I'm glad that you have spoken so frankly. You see, I'm a married man, I've children . . ."

"Now I must go on," the doctor interrupted. "Have a good journey! Carnac is an interesting place. Let him have a look at the menhirs while you're there."

They separated, and Buanic climbed up into the high seat beside Efflam. Soon the car flew along again, accompanied continually by the loud tootings of the horn—out on to a new blue asphalt road with open fields on either side. Trees began to appear round the farms: wind-blown poplars and pines, which showed the direction of the prevailing wind by the way they were bent. The patches of tuze on the stony slopes became larger and larger. The bushes that marked the boundaries of the fields grew ever more luxuriant and finally turned into hedges, covered closely with shining yellow flowers.

Buanic was talkative and sociable, but Efflam did not listen as politely as usual. He was affected by the new landscape pictures they were passing, and he was breathing a different air—air shared by the many trees of the forest. Here 'they danced their gavotte' and here 'they were accompanied by flowers for miles and miles'. A melancholy that was so great that it became a sorrow pressed down upon him. He screwed up his eyes tight and saw before his inner vision the flat, storm-beaten peninsula from which he had come, so isolate and so harsh. Here all was soft and mild. Budding trees and trees with tender light-green or grey downy leaves, abundance of flowers everywhere, and hills and valleys in constant variation.

"It's true enough, isn't it," said Buanic, "that Brittany has her spring? She shines and shimmers. Listen! Now you shall hear something."

He slowed down. They were on a road that cut straight and broad through a forest. Other cars were constantly either meeting them or passing. Buanic drove on a little farther, seeking—and then—the wheels jumped and there was the crashing sound of dry branches breaking. The load behind them rattled more

than ever. Efflam started at the bumps and opened his sleepy eyes and discovered that they were in the midst of a jumble of dark tree-trunks. They were right in the forest itself. Twigs and light leaves rustled above them. In the distance they could hear the bubbling and rippling of running water.

"Brittany has her spring," said Buanic, and, unfolding his large linen cloth, he took out long, narrow lengths of bread cut lengthwise. The light red ham flapped outside the edges when he bit into the thick sandwich.

"Brittany has her spring." He launched. "We might just as well eat our sandwiches here so that you can see the forest and hear how it sounds. Then there is one thing I want to ask you. Listen, do you hear the streams—and there is a thrush! Farther away there are lots of them. Other birds too. Now, Efflam, tell me one thing. How about that silver slipper you are always talking about? Do you really mean that I have carried one about, or is it all your fancy?"

Efflam also was dragging at the tough bread, the ham flapping against his cheek now and then. He turned his eyes towards his companion, mildly reproachful.

"Why do you doubt, Monsieur?"

"Doubt! No, no, no! But look here, *Monsieur le Prince* Efflam, I have always wished to keep myself strictly to logic."

There was silence for a time, and they heard the low, secret murmur of the stream away among the trees, leaping and dancing in little gay cascades.

"Brittany has her spring," said Efflam, as if he were quoting a line from a poem.

"Yes," answered the other, who had now satisfied his hunger, putting away his bottle with its mixture of wine and water. "Yes, it was spring the first time I came to Kervily, but then I had no flowers with me. If I had known . . ."

Marie-Jeanne had stood among the family group, waving good-bye. She had waved and gesticulated, forgetful of all except the large, grey-blue lorry as it turned the corner and then hooted in the main street, becoming smaller and smaller as it receded down the road. She herself had to go in the same direction, and she took her canvas bag and set off. By the time she had gone through

the small streets and lanes the grey-blue lorry had long since been devoured by the desolation of the road. In front of her Uncle Guillaume was walking along with his cow at the end of a long, loose rope. Marie Jeanne made no effort to catch him up. As he walked along, both he and the cow made the road look more empty than ever.

She left the high road and took one of the smaller paths coming out on to the cultivated fields and the fen-lands that lay behind the shore itself and between the villages. Church spires and the gables of houses rose towards the sea and the sky, and she could see water almost all round her. It shimmered, clean but hard and cold. This piece of land, her own home-land, pushing out towards all this coldness, towards an even greater solitude, an even greater desolation. Farther inland there were trees, even forests stretching for miles. Once she had been in Yves' lorry as far as Carnac. He had taken the whole family to the *Pardon* at St Cornely.

They had spent two whole days there and had been shown all that was worth seeing. She had, from the very first, been afraid of the many trees, that they took away the view and seemed to be lying in wait for something with their shadows and rustling leaves. It was as if the ground had not been properly groomed, as if it were shaggy and long haired. Suddenly she was standing among the menhirs. That was the most terrifying experience of all. She would never have believed that there were so many in existence. She hopped round in the labyrinth formed by the stones like a wounded hare, frightened lest the grim grey rows of stones would turn into grim grey rows of tramping soldiers. Yves had told them the whole story. These were the armies gathered to attack the good Pope Cornely, who had been forced to flee from the old heathen Rome. St Cornely transformed them into stones, and once a year the curse was raised and they awoke and marched.

Was Efflam there now? Was he driving through the forest and forgetting the naked, solitary slip of land out here? Or was he even now walking amongst the menhirs? "O St Cornely, you who have power over these stone soldiers, do not let them trample on my friend!"

"O Holy Mary, do not let him lose himself among the trees! Do not let him be tempted and lured by the big towns! Do not

let him be trampled to death by the stone soldiers!" prayed Marie-Jeanne. The sea was dangerous, the storms could be dreadful, but the dangers inland were worse than any of them.

The sea was now so dazzling that she could no longer look at it, and she let her eyes rest on the dark turfy soil of the path. She longed to creep down into the deep road between the walls to calm herself, just as one crept into the low, half-dark rooms to get away from the wide expanse of sea and open fields. But the road was still like a canal for the rain-water.

Eflam stood among the monoliths. They marched onwards in long grey rows and disappeared into a hollow. Then they were visible again on the slopes farther away, marching over the crest of the hill until they were lost to the eye between moorland bushes and solitary pine trees. Those farthest away looked simply like points, not only because of the distance, but also because they were actually smaller. Those at the end where he now stood were the largest. His nostrils quivered; he sensed the smell of grey stone. This stone forest had its own smell, just as the pine forests in the neighbourhood had their own scent of resin and pine needles. The blocks that stood nearest to him were terrifying, whether they stood shaped like a sharp, challenging sword pointing upwards towards the heavens, or like an arrow-head or tongue of fire, or like the most primitive of all things, the bodily sign of manhood. Or whether they were rounded like a wheel, like a sliver of moon or like the simplest symbol of womanhood, the belly, the mother's womb. They were dead, but with strong inherent life, as they stood there casting their shadows. In the sun and the ever-changing shadows a human face would appear here and there on those otherwise blind, dead stones, or a lion's head or the head of some other beast. They were as terrifying and mysterious as were the heads of the sphinxes in the desert.

Eflam wandered among the menhirs, who, according to legend, were Cæsar's soldiers, subjected to this stern transformation. He himself was, in thought and memory, bound in an almost equally strong bondage, although he could still move from place to place as they in their time had been able to do.

The riddle of these grey rows was, however, older than Cæsar's armies and baffled both popular belief and tradition. People

fumbled about, trying to guess at their origin. Efflam in his passivity was more subject than most to the emanations from this forest of pillars smelling of grey stone. He had forgotten where he came from, forgotten his new name. He wandered aimlessly about. Finally he came out into the front row—and then suddenly he noticed that the country in front of him was entirely free from menhirs. A motor road shone, swinging widely up a hill.

Efflam's mind was at last able to get in touch with his brain, and he became conscious of certain sounds which his ears had actually been hearing for a long time. Short, strong signals. Up there on the hill he saw the long, grey-blue body of the lorry. He went hastily towards it, hurrying more and more and running the last bit of the way.

The lorry put mile after mile behind it. Buanic's hands on the wheel, on the gears and buttons, were as sure as before. His eyes were as sharp, although the low afternoon sun shone blindingly on the road in front of them. Efflam sat swaying with the undulations of the road. He was still shivering from the fright the stones in the desolated grey 'sun temples' had given him. Yves Buanic chewed gum and was silent. He was always a little subdued when he turned homewards. It still seemed to him as he approached Finisterre that he was turning his back on the world and on life and indeed was setting out towards *la fin des terres*, as its name expressed. He shivered inwardly.

The day leapt towards its close, but the forest thinned out, and the sun, which for a short time had been hidden behind the trees, now shone dazzlingly again. The clumps of trees all leaned towards the north-east. The air was cooler, cleaner, lighter. There were still a couple of fields, with bush-like trees, and a farm with last year's hay-stacks anchored to the ground with ropes and stones. The sun began to grow round and clear in outline.

A little group of towers: the tower and spires of Tréoultré church. Yves Buanic sat there with a calm and satisfied expression on his face. He was now rid of the depression.

Quickly he took the curves of the village, the turn by the school and the next by the church, then they tore down the straight road out of the town. Straight in front of them stood the lighthouse; the white walls of the houses shone. The sun stood red over La

Joie. Naked and pure lay the earth, bereft of all that could conceal and hide. The mighty cupola of the heavens sank down towards the shining sea.

Boldly, skilfully and carefully Buanic piloted his big lorry through the narrow streets and parked outside his mother-in-law's shop.

Efflam got down from the seat and remained standing with his head lifted, listening, feeling without really seeing. He heard the roaring of the surf. The air filled with the stillness of evening, yet full of movement, cooled his temples, his cheek and his throat.

Terrified, thrilled and happy, he tottered into the house past the family group at the door. In the bedroom he collapsed on to the bed. Buanic took a wooden box from the lorry and put it in the middle of the kitchen.

"Look here, Maman Buanic," he said. "I have not forgotten you this time either. Bernadette, Eliane, help Maman to empty the box. Marie-Jeanne, look here, here's your part of the spoil. Efflam picked most of them."

Marie-Jeanne had waited all through the hours of the day without sense or thought, staring blindly at the cars on the road. When the right one appeared she was so happy and expectant that her heart beat irregularly. He was home again. But he had taken no notice of her. He had taken no notice of anyone. Was he land-bewitched, was he forest-bewitched? Did he no longer care for anything out here in this land by the sea? She started when her uncle spoke about him.

"I was uneasy about Efflam. How did the journey go? Was he car-sick?"

"Not in the least, Father-in-law. He took it all like a prince, but I got no work out of him. I asked Dr. Guilcher. . . . Yes, all went well, except that he almost lost himself among the menhirs."

Suddenly Efflam stood among them all in the kitchen. His red costume was creased and his hair untidy.

"Efflam, thank you for the flowers," said Marie-Jeanne at once. He took her by the shoulders and pushed her gently but decidedly to one side, and, without even looking at her, said hastily:

"I must go out. There's someone waiting for me."

He went towards the lighthouse and followed the sea-shore to-

wards La Joie. The strong, salty air was all around him and the wind was sharp in his eyes. He felt dizzy. He sensed the closeness of the great unexplained and unexplainable. Fear and awe possessed him. He was happy.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SPRING FLOODS HAD SUBSIDED AT LAST, and Guillaume, his neighbour Hélias and the other smallholders took their one, two or more cows to the meadows along the shore. The creatures were led out of the hovels behind the houses. Their legs and hind-quarters were stiff from the caked manure in which they had lain, and they were led in slow cow-trot through the village out on to the open highway and on to the fresh ground by the sea. There by degrees the rain cleaned them, both their backs and their flanks.

Efflam wandered about the meadows, and the solitary creatures—tied up a long way from each other—followed him with their eyes with the melancholy of all creation in their gaze. The day before, the wind had beaten the rain in from the sea, and the cows, like the boats in the bay below, had stood firm if turned in one direction so as to take the bad weather from behind. To-day was calm, and they were grazing quietly.

He tried to reach the line of breakers. It was farther than he had expected, and Efflam was soon flushed from his efforts and his eagerness to cover the distance. His feet began to sink down into the fine, light sand; the grass became more and more scarce and finally stopped altogether. In its place, prickly creepers and tall ice-green plants were spread about right up to the many hillocks of the dunes. On the side facing the sea these hillocks sank abruptly, ending almost in a low wall, and from there the beach sloped gently down towards the water.

Efflam went down the slope to the belt of wet sand, where the tide had receded, and which was as firm as a boarded floor and easy to walk on. He took a childish delight in it and began to walk quickly along. The cluster of houses, white as sea-gulls, at

the end of the great bend of the bay shone far away as a tempting goal. He walked and walked, feeling ever more secure and happy, and forgetting his goal in his delight in the way itself. The air was soft, there was not a breath of wind. The tide had turned, and the sea was on its way up the beach, advancing in light waves, which caressed the shore. Beyond these soft, oncoming waves the sea lay smooth and shining as satin. He tramped along, letting the sun warm his face.

"Is that you, St. Anne?" he murmured. "I know they have built an altar to you in Trémeur. Is that the reason why you have chosen this bit of coast as your home?"

Yes, this heavenly '*Grandmère*' seemed to be walking along beside him. He felt her nearness. She caressed his cheek.

He zig-zagged in a leisurely fashion between the edge of the water and the bottom of the sand-dunes, where the sand gave like loose snow. A twisting belt showed the highest point to which the tide had risen in the spring, and on this sandy belt he found many things that the sea had brought in. He found giant crab-shells, dead, flower-like jelly-fish, gleaming ivory-white backbones of cuttle-fish, and cockle-shells in all the colours of the rainbow, from the size of a hand to the size of a pin's head.

He went on farther towards the quay of his own village, and now the dark 'islands' appeared, breaking up the sky-line. He heard the solitary, melancholy note of a plover. Efflam kept the sound in his ears for a long time, while the thin, glassy outer fringe of the water, which had been tenderly washing the shore, now and again touched his sabots with its thin, glassy, outer fringe. Then for a time he was followed by a flock of small sand-pipers with their swift wings and long, thin, wader legs. They settled on the sand and became almost undistinguishable from the whitish-yellow, sun-bathed surface. He could see them darting forward, their legs moving like elusive shadows, until they suddenly rose, flashed and grew dark out over the water. Then they turned and thus again became transparently grey like the air around them and as unreal as the day.

He walked and walked. On the top of the dune high grasses grew, silhouetted against the sky. He saw large, black birds resting there like birds of prey waiting for their victims. 'Who are you?' thought Efflam uneasily. He missed the soothing companion

whom he had felt was with him, and, looking around him, half awake, he cried:

"*Grandmère*—where are you?"

There were some women in black standing on top of the dune, their men working down by the edge of the water. They all stopped what they were doing and looked at the man who had suddenly cried out, calling for someone in that desolate tone of voice.

"Who is he calling for?" asked one of them.

"His grandmother, I thought he said," answered another. "Perhaps his memory has begun to come back. Perhaps he remembers his family."

Efflam grew conscious of the fact that the beach here just below the village was not so empty as it had been when first he came out. Women stood and sat on the grassy edge crocheting. They looked so gloomy in their black clothes and with their stern faces. Their towering head-dress made them appear still more solemn and unapproachable. The men walked about with bare feet, their trousers rolled up to their knees so that their white legs shone in strong contrast to their brown, furrowed faces. They were punting heavy, flat-bottomed boats up towards the shore. One of them shouted a greeting with coarse facetiousness, but trembling with irritation.

"Good morning, Jesus! Have you forgotten an old friend?"

The people who were near were shocked and exclaimed loudly. Efflam walked calmly down to the person who had accosted him, to the two men who were working on each side of the boat. He held out his hand.

"Good morning, Lescantin. I remember you well enough. We were together on the *Cormorant*. Why aren't you there any longer?"

Lescantin's companion answered instead of the fisherman, who seemed unable to speak for the moment: "Jehan was obliged to stay ashore. Had you not heard, Monsieur? His nerve gave way. Wasn't that so, Jehan?"

"Well, well, Tanneau. Not exactly that," answered Lescantin sulkily, glaring from under his eyelids at Efflam while he went on unloading seaweed from the boat, angrily pushing the iron tongs down into the heavy mass. "There's no money in fishing,"

he went on. "This sort of work needs less capital and gives a more settled income."

Two of the women who were standing about came down to the boat. They were barefoot and had knotted their aprons round their skirts and pinned up the wide sleeves of their blouses. They came to help their husbands load the seaweed on to the litters. Madame Lescantin said indignantly:

"You know well enough, Jehan, that you're talking nonsense. You had signed on for the whole summer and I gave you money for all the things you had to take with you. But you had one unfortunate trip after another. It is expensive to have to be towed back two and three days after having set out and to be obliged to throw half the week's bread ration to the dogs and go to the baker for more."

"Why had the bread to be given to the dogs?" asked Madame Tanneau. The other whirled round with her pitchfork in her hand trying to free herself from the long, tough bands of seaweed, which she had twisted round her legs in her violence. The two Tanneaus winked at each other, laughing. Madame Lescantin was known for her sour tongue.

"Why?" she answered the question. "Because the owners of that old *Cormorant* won't pay to have it properly repaired. Everything on board is swimming in oil and petrol, and the bread becomes saturated and uneatable."

Her husband gave a loud laugh. "And yet you say that I was silly to leave the old tub!"

"Yes, because I am more of a fisherman than you, so I know that time is bound to level out everything. If one has stuck out the losses there is all the more reason to hang on and wait till the luck turns. No, Jehan, there's big money in fishing when the odds are even; this seaweed business only gives small profits, and no one knows that better than you do! I don't know what came over you. Perhaps Monsieur here has had something to do with it."

She looked askance at Efflam as she grasped the back shafts of the over-filled litter. Lescantin himself took up the front shafts, and they carried the seaweed up the beach until they were above high-water level. Efflam followed them, backwards and forwards, until the husband and wife had carried up the whole load and

spread it out over the sand to dry. Then he stood still beside Madame Lescantin, and when she had put the pitchfork away and had begun crocheting again, he said:

"Woman, if you loved your husband you would understand him."

Lescantin had already gone down to the boat and was pushing it out with Tanneau. His wife looked at Efflam again, this time more fiercely than ever. Young Madame Tanneau also gave him a side glance full of restrained amusement. When the young stranger sat down and began playing with the shells in the sand—even pulling a whole handful from his pocket—Madame Lescantin became more and more angry. But with the best will in the world she could not get out one of the angry words which were on the tip of her tongue. At length her own bad temper got on her nerves. 'Why,' she thought, 'why is he still sitting there, the lazy lout, sitting there playing like a child with sand and empty shells? One can scarcely think that he is really . . . why, it's more like seeing a ghost.'

Her fingers on the crochet thread moved like lightning. They moved as quickly as the legs of the small wading birds on the sandy beach. Her feet sank down more and more into the loose running mass of dry sand on which she stood, straight and heavy as a statue, waiting for the boat to come back with more seaweed. This time the wait was long, as the men had taken the bigger boat and gone farther out. 'What folly!' she thought. 'The water has already risen so high that it is waste of time trying to get any more to-day.'

As she stood there, keeping her eyes fixed on the work in her hands, she jumped suddenly: she thought she again heard her husband's jokingly ribald shout: "Good morning, Jesus!"

She forced herself to look round, terrified lest the man playing at her side should no longer be there. That she would find that he was simply a figment of her imagination, a ghost—or something still more strange—and more dangerous. Jehan was often odd in the way he spoke, although she seldom bothered to listen to what he really meant. How was it that he had spoken that holy name that he generally only took on his lips profanely in moments of great inward stress? Madame Lescantin felt still more frightened. She was more astonished that Efflam was still there

than if he had disappeared in a supernatural way. She collected all her will-power and walked the few steps down the slope towards him. As she stood there, still crocheting, she asked, her voice jarring as she spoke:

"Who are you?"

The silence continued. She heard only the calm lapping of the waves and the light rattle of shells and mussels when he emptied the little ones out of the bigger ones. She was again forced to look down at him where he sat with his collection of shells spread out in a variegated pattern round him. He sorted, arranged, and rearranged. Then Madame Lescantin began to smile as if at a foolish, irresponsible child. There was a time when she and Jehan had taken their boy, their Hugo, on summer Sundays down to the sea-shore, where he had played with shells and stones, their boy who now lay with his ribs smashed. Yes, they also had played, for they had to help him both to find shells and to sort and arrange them. And then they became, as it were, caught up in the game and found it difficult to stop. They were still like children then, she and Jehan. It was probably her fault that things had become so different, because she had feared that the villagers might say that she and her family aped the town-dwellers and other tourists by playing on the beach. So she had let Jehan and the boy go by themselves, but she knew that it was never quite the same for them as when she was with them; soon they gave it up altogether and each of them enjoyed themselves separately and in their own way, while she became a heavy, cross-grained old sitter-at-home. She went to church and took part in "all the funerals, and on these occasions she dressed up grandly, her long, hooded cloak billowing out from her shoulders right down to her ankles. She was drawn towards all that was solemn and gloomy.

Madame Lescantin looked absent-mindedly at the shells in Efflam's hands. Suddenly she noticed a shell lying at her feet, covered with streaks of yellow and blue, and before she knew what she was doing, she bent down and added it to Efflam's collection. Then she said brusquely:

"We used to call that one 'the knife' when I was young."

Efflam held it up against the light and felt it with his sensitive fingers; it had the clearness of enamel inside and was as thin as

the thinnest knife-blade. Then he took up another shell and showed it to her.

"What did you call this brown one with the blue stripes?"

"It was a 'hat'."

"And the small, rose-coloured cockle-shells that St. Anne found for me—I'll take them home to Eliane—what did you call them?"

"We called them 'little pigs'."

"They are like pearls. Eliane shall make herself a pearl necklace," said Efflam. "Bernadette shall have all the brown 'hats'. I have some others for Odile. She shall have the small, golden-yellow ones of which there are so many. Do you think she will like them, Madame?"

"Yes, all children like the yellow ones. We used to make necklaces of them."

There was silence. Then once more the woman asked, but now in an almost friendly tone of voice:

"Who are you really?"

He stood up, and in that moment he was changed from a child playing in the sand to a tall, serious man with a clear forehead and strong, gentle eyes. She drew back, irresolute and embarrassed. A short while ago he had been an irritating loafer. Then a fool, and then a child. Now, finally . . . ! She drew herself away from him a few steps.

"They say you are a prince," she said, her voice breaking. Then she added, with newly awakened distrust: "Can there be lost princes in our day?"

"No, only lost human beings. With your permission I will go now. Good-evening, Madame. Please remember me to your husband."

It was Palm Sunday, and more people than usual were on their way towards the chapel outside the village. They all carried green boughs in their hands. The Garrec sisters walked along, queen-like in their high coifs like a group of shining towers in the landscape, among the many others moving in the same direction. Marie-Suzette and her two eldest daughters wore black, long-haired fur capes that in their large luxuriance reached right down to their hips and to the pleated skirt. Blanche, the one who lived

away from the family house, preened herself in her new expensive marten skin.

The youngest of all, Rose, shone in stiff pearl embroideries and shining silk. She was still small in the waist, walked lightly and was elegant in an almost Eastern way. Rose had a special reason for making herself look smart. Her husband, Corentin Galvez, had come on leave and was to stay with them over Easter. They walked along hand in hand like brother and sister, he boyishly slim in his sailor's uniform and as smart as she was. The children had shed their long trousers and were dressed in large satin bows and short dresses with white gloves and socks. Neither Buanic nor Le Lay were with them. One had found a couple of boon companions, the other was in the harbour waiting to put out to sea. The third son-in-law, on the other hand, Kérlaérec, was with them on their way to church, carrying his Palm Sunday branch in his mutilated carpenter's hands.

Efflam's costume had been washed and was therefore a shade lighter, but shone all the stronger. Marie-Jeanne saw, to her delight, that he was wearing the scarf she had knitted for him. It was sea-blue, and he was therefore in the colours most liked by the men—red with blue added, or the other way round. Marie-Jeanne also looked at the bunches of flowers that were being carried, and thought of Amélie Jegou. The latter had been to get bay-tree branches from Dr. Guilcher's garden the day before and had then for the first time paid a visit to Marie Le Donche's little house. 'She brought us a big, sweet loaf of wheaten bread, but it was not us she had in mind,' thought Marie-Jeanne. 'It was for Efflam's sake she came. She knew that he was with us chopping wood.'

Guillaume and his family left the main road and walked in a long line along the path crossing the field. Marie Le Donche did the same. She pulled her worn, fringed shawl tighter about her bent, rounded back and looked with a sad and somewhat self-satisfied air at the high coifs in front of her. Marie-Jeanne toiled after her mother, wishing that Efflam were walking in front of her instead of behind. Only Caroline had chosen the main road; they could still hear the gay pinging of her bicycle bell.

Efflam walked last, looking across the two immediately in front of him, across little crooked, hopping Marie-Jeanne and over the

thick-set, bent back of Marie Le Donche. The path made several turns, and the line of people in front of him turned with it, meandering along in a winding line towards the chapel. He himself was carefully carrying the green branches with their stiff, spiced, scented leaves in his arms, and rocking dreamily as he walked.

'He is wearing my scarf,' thought Marie-Jeanne, 'and yet I am not quite happy, although it is a Feast Day, the day on which the Jews paid homage to Our Blessed Lord. Why am I not happy? Is it because Good Friday will soon be upon us?'

Outside the chapel stood a group of men with their hands in their trouser pockets. They spat and moved their feet restlessly. Jehan Lescantin was one of them. He did not know whether all the other men were going to the Mass, and therefore he could not make up his mind whether he would go on or not. His wife had gone to Pont l'Abbé to visit their son in hospital. She had asked him to go to Mass and get their palms blessed. He held the little green branches in his hand, but awkwardly along his hip so that they might not be noticed. It would have been better if he had taken the bus to Pont l'Abbé and she had looked after this visit to the church, which after all was the woman's business. But she had been anxious to see the boy and had looked out a little box of shells to take to him. Hugo would enjoy playing with them, she declared.

Lescantin now saw Efflam's dark hair and blue scarf behind all the Maries on the path. At that moment the bell began to ring, and the men moved slowly towards the entrance. He had meant to behave like his companions, but was in the end left alone outside, bound by a stubbornness that annoyed him. He ought to take the trouble to go in, if only for his wife's sake, he thought. Even if there were no good to be gained, it could at any rate do him no harm. But his temperament was such that he put all the meaning in the world into his very smallest action. If he fell on his knees in the church he fell on his knees, and it was not at all the same thing as simply bending his legs.

Inside were the rough granite walls of the chapel and its cool green-blue roof. The statues of the saints on their wall-brackets sorrowed beneath their violet Lenten veils. The Virgin Mother on the altar, the Giver of Joy to this wild coast with its cruel sea, hid

her face and her outstretched arms. Only her hands were visible under the edge of the veil. Efflam knelt at the end of the church, where the bell-rope hung down. In front of him was a forest of white coifs; beyond these he saw the priest in black and white and the two servers who moved back and forth and across in their little altar dance, glowing now and again like violet tongues of light in the sunshine from the window close by them. He saw the outline of the Madonna's dumb, veiled face and glimpsed her hands—she stood there as if taking part in a game of blind man's buff, feeling her way.

Suddenly the whole picture changed. The forest of white coifs disappeared beneath a forest of green leaves, for all had risen and lifted their branches high in the air. The chapel was filled with the aromatic scent from the waving branches. Efflam's lay on the floor in front of him. He forgot to hold it up to be blessed. He was praying to the fumbling, awkward hands beneath the veil.

"Holy Mother," he prayed, "my heavenly Mother. Forgive us for making you also suffer! Forgive that I could not be alone in suffering. Forgive us that even to-day you have to stand there with sorrow-clad head while the children of men have innocent faces and wear the proud mitres of festival."

The chapel was crowded. Many knelt or stood right down by the door. Somebody took hold of Efflam's branch at the last moment and held it up among the others, and then put it back, laying it over his hands as they lay clasped on the floor.

Suddenly the Mass seemed to be over and the chapel empty. The tall, powerfully-built priest, who had himself been down and pulled the bell-rope to summon the people, now came down the aisle again with long steps and rustling skirts to lock the door. While he stood there waiting he noticed the man on his knees, but made no sign. When all the low, rush-bottom chairs were empty and even the cantors and the singers had gone, the priest came and laid his hands on Efflam's head.

"My son, have you anything on your heart? I am shutting the church."

Efflam looked up, despairing and confused. The priest took hold of his arm and—strong as he was—half lifted him up from the floor. Pressing the two branches of bay tree into his hands, he

pushed him gently out towards the door. There Efflam suddenly turned his face towards the priest and said:

"You do not know, oh blind servant, whom you are turning out to-day. May my Heavenly Father forgive you your ignorance."

He stumbled on the high threshold, and the priest patted him on his shoulder and answered:

"Poor boy, you are ill! Find your foster-parents and keep close to them."

The door was shut behind Efflam. The priest remained inside, for he used the door leading from the sacristy. In the clear noon light Efflam and Jehan Lescantin found themselves face to face. The latter's gaze was shy, but also crafty. There was both rancour and entreaty in it. He drew the little branch half-way forward from behind his back. He said in a challenging voice:

"You are probably just as good as any priest. Look here, read a prayer and sprinkle a little water on my wife's bay-tree branch."

Efflam's appearance bore no trace of the arrogant words he had just spoken. His face had a tired, slightly brooding expression. He answered:

"The holy water is inside the chapel. Go in and ask for what you want." He put his hand on the latch to open it for his companion, but the priest had already locked it from the inside. At the same time they both heard a clattering noise. The fisherman shrugged his shoulders and pushed out his underlip to indicate that what they both saw made Efflam's suggestion impossible. It was the priest's old Ford, which, rattling and smoking, was just getting under way. Lescantin again pointed to his branch:

"Do what is required, there's a good chap. It's only going to be stuck into our potato patch. Surely you can do a conjuring trick to keep storm and vermin away."

"Take my branches," said Efflam, taking in exchange the branch that Jehan had for so long been rubbing against his trousers. His gaze was radiant, but absent-minded, and before he had finished speaking he was on his way to the Calvary close to the church. He laid the branch on its base, went round to the other side and began to speak to the empty road in its noon-day quiet.

"To what shall I liken this generation?" he cried. "Blindly they wander through the valley of fear. That day of homage and

praise when my heart was wrung by sorrow over the coming overthrow of the Holy City and my soul was tortured by its knowledge of the Cross which had already been put together and prepared—that day has become a day in which the children of men deck out their own puny bodies, while the saints in sorrow hide their faces!”

Jehan Lescantin stood there as a solitary listener. His broad, bony head was outlined against the ocean as he leant against the sea-wall, looking towards the Calvary and the red-clothed figure with his arms outstretched. The two long branches which he had received from Efflam lay beside him on the wall. Another listener now joined him. Caroline, from sheer joy in life, had unnecessarily gone round by Saint-Fiacre and was now on her way home. She jumped off the bicycle and stood still. Some young people from Saint-Fiacre, also on bicycles, stopped too. Efflam continued, deeply moved by his own words:

“Yes, my Holy Ones hide their faces; the sorrow and the shame is cast upon them. This is the will of the Father: the lot of the Holy Ones is to suffer so that the sons of men may smile. But, my child, think for a moment what it has cost. Think and become good and pure in your joy so that your neighbours delight in you.”

The three young cyclists had at first been only amused. Now they were suddenly touched and waited silently so as to hear more. But Efflam’s arm sank down; he went again to the other side of the Calvary and knelt with his forehead against the stone edge. The cyclists went silently away. Lescantin stood with an immovable face. When Efflam rose the fisherman came forward and said in a rough voice:

“Who are you?”

“Do you not yet know?” Efflam asked simply. They began to walk homeward along the high-road past the lighthouse.

“Do you yourself know who you are?” Lescantin asked again. Efflam stopped and smiled at the gloomy man.

“Jehan Lescantin, you know who I am better than I do myself,” he said. “God has chosen you to witness about me.”

“That’s a lie,” grunted Lescantin and beat his new, fresh bay-tree branches against his legs. “I know nothing and I have nothing—nothing—to say. Look here! This is what I think about all this nonsense about saints and holiness and leaves that have been blessed!” He stopped and broke them, the brittle branches

crackling as they broke. Growling and with hot, angry eyes he threw them away.

Efflam stooped and picked up the loose leaves and the small branches. Carrying them in his hand he went over and sat down by the wayside. Lescantin continued towards the village. It was as if he heard a sob behind him, and he purposely drowned the sound with his sabots. He was ashamed of what he had done, but stronger than his feeling of shame was his curiosity: he would very much have liked to know what the strange creature would do next. His strongest feeling was, however, stubbornness, and therefore he went on without looking back.

When he arrived home Lescantin went in to see his neighbour and asked for a branch of bay so as to have something to give to his wife. But his wife did not, as he had expected, push it into their potato patch. She only put a few small leaves there, that was all. She used the rest of it to decorate their wedding certificate and the photograph of Hugo in his confirmation suit.

"What do you mean by that?" growled the man.

"So that the good and beautiful shall remain in our memories and be blessed. Hugo was so pleased with the shells I took him to-day. Were there many people in the chapel? Did you see the fine monsieur who lives with the Garrecs?"

"Yes, I left him sitting between the lighthouse and La Joie, weeping over the sins of the world. Exactly like Our Lord once wept over Jerusalem." He spoke scornfully, and his wife looked up, surprised.

A little later Madame Lescantin called out to the neighbours on the other side of the fence: "Have you heard that the foreign prince who lives with the Garrecs is sitting between the lighthouse and La Joie weeping over the sins of the world?"

The neighbours soon went off in different directions, and each of them said to anyone they met: "Have you heard that the stranger living with the Garrecs is sitting weeping between the lighthouse and La Joie?"

The rumour soon reached Marie-Jeanne. She was spending the day with her cousins Blanche and Gérard, who had invited the family to their home. There were lodgers both above and below in the house, and the people who lived above also had guests. The one party could hear what the other was saying through the thin

boards separating the rooms. Suddenly a sentence made its way particularly clearly into the room: "Do you know . . .

Marie-Jeanne sat quite still. Had she heard aright? Had the others heard the same thing as she? They were all silent, looking upwards as if they were suspicious of something, but then they went on gaily with their loud chatter. Guillaume alone seemed uneasy and said now as he had said once or twice already:

"Why is not Efflam with us here? I wonder where he is? I get anxious when he is so late in coming."

Marie-Jeanne hastily said good-bye and went. Efflam was sitting somewhere weeping . . . she herself had been depressed the whole day. When she had come from the church and had seen him stay behind kneeling there by the bell-rope she had wanted to stand outside and wait. Her mother, however, could not tolerate her daughters standing about outside the church door gossiping, as she called it, and had made her come with her when she went home. Now Marie-Jeanne decided for herself where she would go, and she hastened towards the lighthouse and onwards until she only had the sea and the open country around her, and the road with its moss-grown ditches on either side.

At last, she saw him, a red patch among the green. "O dear God," she prayed, "oh, that nothing terrible may have happened to him," and she hurried on as quickly as she could.

He sat there with a few broken bay-tree branches and leaves scattered round him, and she could see that he had been weeping. Now he was pale and dry-eyed, but with a fire in his eyes that she had never seen before. She wanted to stretch out her arms to him across the ditch, but did not dare, so remained standing there, her arms only half lifted—like the Madonna on her altar, beneath her Lenten veil. He looked at her with his burning glance.

"Marie, you have no veil," he said, and the girl's fingers went to her hair, to her coif, helplessly groping again. She bowed her head and said humbly:

"No, I have no veil. What do you want me to do, Efflam? Do you not like my coif?"

Then he smiled and stretched out his arms across the ditch towards her.

"Your crown, Marie-Jeanne, it is your crown. On your head it is a real crown," he continued, and she grew red and then white

because of his words: "My beloved, you need no veil, you who have your back and your hip." Suddenly his voice rose and became stern:

"Marie-Jeanne, do you love me?"

"Yes," she said and bowed her head again humbly and shyly. There was silence for a moment. Then the second question came suspiciously and expectantly:

"Are you Enora?"

Now she dared to look at him, and with a smile she assured him eagerly: "No, Efflam. Oh, no, Efflam!"

"But you dream about Enora. Enora is the name you like best. You would rather be Enora than anything else. Isn't that so?"

"No, Efflam, no. I like it," she confessed. "But there is another name that I like even better—Azenor."

"Who was Azenor?" he asked mildly, and held out his hand to her as a support. She took it and came over the ditch and sat down beside him. In order to have something for her restless hands to play with she picked a couple of scarlet pimpernels and sat with the small, light-red flowers in her hand while she told him:

"Azenor was the only daughter of King Even in the old Armorica in Brest. She was as straight as a palm tree and lovely as a star, and she was so good that her outer beauty was as nothing to the beauty of her soul. She married Count Goelo, and they loved each other and were happy. Then her father, King Even, became a widower and after a time he married a woman who had a black and evil soul. She slandered her step-daughter, Azenor, who was then cast off both by her husband and her father, and was innocently condemned to death at the stake, only escaping because she was with child. Instead they put her in a barrel in the sea to be destroyed according to the will of God. But God knew that she was pure and innocent. He supported her and let His angels carry food to her until she drifted ashore in Hibernia and was saved."

"Straight as a palm tree and lovely as a star," said Efflam when she was silent.

"Yes, Efflam!" came from Marie-Jeanne's full heart.

"Marie-Jeanne, you are not as straight as a palm tree and as

lovely as a star, but the beauty of your soul far surpasses that of Azenor."

She trembled with happiness and could say nothing, did not even dare to lift her eyes to his. He rose and gave her his hand.

"I think that the Garrecs are waiting for me," he said, and they walked together to the village.

The moon was full in the middle of the week, and the rhythm of the tides was very pronounced. There were crowds of people out on the beach when the tide was low. Marie-Jeanne went with Efflam to the long, sloping part of the beach in the south bay. The morning sun shone between flying clouds. The sea was a streak in the far distance, and its roar was heard only remotely. The crests of the waves made the line of the horizon undulating and uneven.

Efflam carried his tin jar and his short-handled iron rake. He was already bound by the witch-like atmosphere and dizzy with the strong air which the south-west wind brought in with it from the stormy ocean. One of the flying clouds sprinkled a few drops of rain as it passed. The large drops fell on the boats round about, which lay with their keels in the sand, and drummed against his jar and on his sleeve and the breast of his jacket, until the stiff, bright red material had dark spots all over it. Marie-Jeanne had a warm shawl round her chest, knotted at her back, and she was quite unaffected by the rain. The next moment the same rain-cloud darkened the sky above the spires of Tréoultré while the sun shone over the bay.

"Are you finding anything, Efflam?" asked Marie-Jeanne. "Do you know how to look? How to find the two small mussel-holes in the sand? Follow me! It's nothing but blue clay over there. The men are digging for worms for their bait. We must go farther out. Look, Corentin Galvez is collecting mussels. We'll go over to him."

Efflam looked out over the grey beach, past hundreds of gay little runnels. He saw far away out there the blue circle of a sailor's cap. Marie-Jeanne hopped off through the sand-furrows that the sea had left, and Efflam followed her, slowly, sleepily, across the clear little streams between each furrow. His wooden

shoes sank deeply into the loose, gravelly sand between the runnels, but the water soon obliterated his traces so that the surface was immediately as before, looking like an evenly-ploughed field. The girl's light panting could already be heard from another place. She had reached a wide belt of sand, hard as a board.

"Corentin, Corentin," she shouted eagerly. "Have you found anything?" Knowing well that he could not hear her against the wind, she hurried on, gesticulating and sometimes jumping over a larger hollow.

They reached the edge of the sea, which twisted in and out according to the irregularities in the ground. The water lay shallow and marsh-like right to the edge of the cliffs, and the men in high rubber boots were wading about looking for the delicacy of the season, the large, stone-grey mollusc with the inner side of its shell of shining mother-of-pearl. Others were lowered into deep crevices to cut away branch or stubble-like colonies of sea-polyps, flaming blue, like blue mussels, odd, like the claws of birds and as tasty as the best lobster. The ocean itself, with its surf-crested waves, still seemed like a far away voice in the south-east and in the west, where the cascades of foam witnessed that the breakers were higher than ever. Marie-Jeanne asked almost anxiously:

"Haven't you anything with you, Corentin? Aren't you looking for anything at all?"

"No," he answered, standing there with his hands completely empty, well groomed in his dark uniform and with his big sailor's collar blowing round his neck. "I'm looking for nothing. Yes, I'm looking for Rose. Have you seen her?"

"No, Rose never comes down to the beach," said Marie-Jeanne, surprised at the violence in her cousin's voice.

"Not even when that fire-eater over there is down here?" He pointed to Efflam. The latter came forward happily, holding up his bucket.

"Corentin Galvez, do you want to see what I've found?"

"No, it doesn't interest me," said Corentin and turned his back on them.

"Are you unhappy about anything? St Anne likes to see her children happy."

"Oh, indeed."

"This is her beach. I'm sure you knew that."

"No, I did not, and if you will allow me, Mr. Busybody, we'll leave the saints out of it. I do not interest myself in Saint Anne. Have you seen Rose?" This last remark was made in a tone as if Corentin unwillingly put the question to him whom he scornfully called a busybody.

"There she is," said Efflam, pointing landwards. The two others looked doubtfully in the same direction and felt odd when they saw her about whom they had just been speaking. She was far away, but they saw her panting and coughing in the strong wind. When she reached the water-filled furrows she stopped and put her hand to her mouth.

"Corentin, Corentin," she shouted. They went to meet her and her husband asked violently:

"What are you doing here?"

"What are you doing yourself? You disappear without saying a word to a person. I've been running round all the cafés and shops looking for you."

"And I for you. Where have you been hiding yourself?"

"I was sitting behind a wall, crocheting with the Hélias girls. Good-morning, Marie-Jeanne. Are you out with my *paôtr*?"

"What do you call him?"

"*Paôtr*, Corentin, *paôtr*, I say. Will you never learn to understand Breton? He's obviously no ordinary boy. Don't you see that he has a horn in the middle of his forehead like a real troll?"

Rose now waded out to them in an affected way with her skirts held high above the many runnels. Marie-Jeanne stood there uncertainly. The young sailor looked sometimes at his wife and sometimes at Efflam. At last Rose arrived and clung on to her husband. With a glance at Efflam, who was drawing patterns in the sand with his rake, she said jokingly:

"He's rather sweet, isn't he? Look at that lovely shell. Pick it up for me. I want to take it home to Odile."

"Here's another," said Corentin. Very soon the husband and wife were busy collecting shells.

Marie-Jeanne worked away by herself, filling her jar with things that were good to eat. In the meantime the tide rose and the four of them were pushed without noticing it farther and farther up the

beach, although they still remained on the edge of the water, which even seeped in under their shoes.

Suddenly the wind grew stronger than ever, and the rain was upon them. A low, dark bundle of clouds drifted in and emptied themselves in an almost perpendicular downpour. The young couple ran to the nearest boat and hid themselves in the lee under the keel. Everywhere people bent low and ran with jars, spades and rakes in their hands, towards the boats, riding high between their supporting props. Efflam stood straight and took the whipping rain without moving, surprised and confused as if the whole sea had risen in unexpected haste. The safe earth had disappeared, the houses which were visible over the ridge of the dunes, the church tower in Tréoultré, the lighthouse, the harbour, the grey shore itself on which they had been playing—all were resolved into the tattered, wind-blown rain, whistling and roaring like a cloud of smoke. The two for whom he had been collecting shells had gone. All those who had been spread over the vast stretch of beach had disappeared.

He turned round with his pail and rake. On all sides the same greyness, the same deafening roar. And hidden within it another still more powerful roar: the roar of the approaching sea.

'The sea is upon me, the sea will take me,' he thought. 'Blessed Saint Anne, why have you left me, do you not see that I am in peril?'

Now someone appeared suddenly in the mist of the rain—a small, lumping creature. Efflam cried aloud like a child who from pure relief dares to show his terror:

"Marie-Jeanne!" he shrieked.

"I'm coming," she panted, "get down under that boat! Here, Efflam, here!"

He found the boat, and under it stood Corentin and Rose hugging and kissing each other. The husband and wife made room for the other two, looked at them over their shoulders and then sank back mouth to mouth. Marie-Jeanne drew a deep breath and her hard, round cheeks were redder than the reddest camellia. The rain continued to fall straight down, but they were protected where they stood in the little triangle which was formed under the stern of the boat. The sailor became more and more passionate in his love-making and looked at Efflam as if by his kissing and

caressing he hoped to arouse the other's desire and envy.

"The water's rising," Marie-Jeanne warned. "We can't stay here any longer."

"Oh, there's no danger," said Corentin between the long kisses. "It will soon be over, and all too soon, isn't that so, Rose? Isn't that so, Efflam? Look at us! Will it soon be over?" They both laughed, he and his wife.

Marie-Jeanne pretended to see nothing. Efflam looked at them both with his sorrowful eyes, and his face twitched painfully. Then he gripped the jar and the shaft of his little rake and went out into the rain. His receding figure was seen more and more indistinctly, and was soon only like a weak red fire in the grey smoke-cloud of rain. The two young ones stood as before with arms and legs twined around each other, but they looked after him in a perplexed way. Marie-Jeanne gave them one reproachful look and then began to sob.

"You're bad. You're bad." Then she also dived into the rain with her poor legs.

Corentin looked ashamed. He turned to his wife and kissed her again, but very differently, and said:

"We won't do it again, Rose. Let's promise the good Saint Anne that we won't do it in this way again. Shall we?"

"No, never again. Shall we go and see what has happened to them?"

"No. Look! Here comes the sun. And there they are walking up the beach."

"Guillaume and Marie-Pierre, each with their spades, were hoeing up the soil round the potato-tops. The spades they used were broad and sharp, and their shoes were like boats, Guillaume's especially because he liked to have them so large that he could fill them up with straw. As always the work, which they seemed to be doing so clumsily, became the neatest handiwork and the potato patch was like a garden bed.

Marie-Louise sat busily working. She was mending the nets torn during the week. She looked at the guest of the house with a sarcastic smile and said:

"Efflam, could you not go and help Papa so that Marie-Pierre may make gloves? Can't you be of some use?"

Efflam rose immediately and offered to help. Guillaume slapped him on his shoulder and burst out:

"Dear son, dear son, my friend Efflam, the work will be as play if you help us."

But Efflam's rows were not like garden beds. He trampled on the potato green, he covered them altogether with earth. He struck the handle of the spade against his stomach so violently that he winded himself, grew pale, and had to totter away to the roadside to pull himself together. Next time he threw up earth into his eyes and came back half blind when they assembled for dinner. Guillaume was distressed about the pain in the other's eye, but at the same time he was content as he sat spreading lumps of butter on his bread, which he cut into mouthfuls.

"No," he said, "Efflam mustn't go out into the potato patch again. He's no farmer. It's not suitable work for him."

Eliane supported her grandfather from across the table: "Efflam is a prince and not a farmer." Then she grew thoughtful and anxious for information—"What does a prince do, Grandfather?"

"What does a prince do?—ha, hm—he governs and rules."

"No," came Bernadette's decided voice, her mouth full of bread and butter. "A prince doesn't rule, the President does that."

Guillaume answered, subdued, instructive:

"That's right, little Bernadette. In France the President rules. And all the great ministers as well, of course. But there are countries that have kings, and there the king rules."

"What does a prince do, then?" asked Eliane, and her grandfather looked confused and rubbed his chin.

"Well, let's see, what does a prince do? What does a prince do? Ask your grandmother. She'll be able to tell you."

Eliane's eyes were turned towards Marie-Suzette, but the latter was short of breath and could only whisper:

"Child, I don't know. Ask Uncle Marcel. He reads so many papers."

"But I want to know it now, at once!" cried Eliane unhappily. "Uncle Marcel won't be back until Saturday. Don't you know, Corentin, you who sail on such large ships?" Corentin smiled and then said softly so that Efflam in the room next door could not hear him:

"Little Eliane, as far as I know, princes do absolutely nothing. No, not as much as your Prince Efflam, for after all he cuts wood for Aunt Marie. But then—I've seen nothing but black nigger princes, so that I may be wrong as far as the white ones go."

"Who shall I ask, then?" Eliane complained.

"Ask him himself," said Rose, and the child's face shone. She went into the room where Efflam lay in darkness behind closed shutters and with a cloth over his eyes. She went to the edge of the bed and shook him: "Efflam, I want to know something. Hurry up, Efflam, wake up! Tell me what princes do!"

He turned and smiled. "My sweet child, a real prince fights dragons," he said, and the child shouted at once to the others in the kitchen:

"Yes, yes, he fights dragons! Listen, he fights dragons!"

"Heard, heard," said Guillaume. But Eliane put her hands on the edge of the bed and asked further:

"What more, Prince Efflam?"

"He takes upon himself the sufferings of others."

"Why?"

"He suffers for his brothers and sisters. To help his father's subjects."

"Oh," she said slowly and wonderingly, then she rushed out into the kitchen. "Also he suffers, Grandpère, Grandmère, Maman! He takes on himself suffering so as to help others!" She wanted to go in and ask for more, but Corentin caught hold of her and held her prisoner.

"You're talking nonsense," said Guillaume. "Eliane, come to me, come to your grandfather. I'll tell you the story of how it was when I lay off Portugal fishing for lobsters. One thousand, five hundred large, blue-black, yellow and brown claw-animals in each creel. That was fishing for a prince. Then the Portuguese pleasure-boat came out to us, and there were ladies in it, beautiful Portuguese ladies, and everybody on that boat was full of merriment and mischief. We danced the whole night long. Then we were all princes, Eliane."

CHAPTER NINE

THEY WERE SITTING ROUND THE TABLE on Good Friday with the lean fare of the Fast before them. After that each one went to his work. The fishing-boats were out at sea as usual; they treated this long, gloomy memorial day neither as a holy day nor as a holiday. Efflam went to the church at Tréoultré. The big church held only empty chairs. The high altar was bare, also all the side altars. The flowers, the candlesticks, even the altar-cloths had been taken away, all except the one that lay on the altar in disorder, giving the church an even more desolate appearance. It was as if a storm had passed over it, or as if someone had left in the very greatest possible haste, taking the ornaments with him so as to escape from an imminent danger. The saints slumbered in the darkness hidden under their dark violet veils. The gloomy coffin under the old, fringed baldachin stood out all the stronger in its place below the pulpit, almost in the middle of the church.

Efflam remained standing down by the door like a lost child and looked at the many empty chairs, at the ravaged altars and at the gaudy pictures in the stained-glass windows. Then he heard footsteps; they clattered noisily against the stone floor down one of the side aisles. Then he heard them in the other side aisle. He sat down on one of the chairs at the back of the church, and at the same moment he heard music from the front of the church, from the organ, at which a young priest was practising. Efflam stayed where he was, growing more and more lost, more and more melancholy.

Suddenly he winced. He heard loud blows from somewhere in the church. Again and again he heard the ~~crashing~~ blows—from a hammer perhaps or from heavy sticks being knocked against each other. While the organ played and the blows thundered, Efflam sat with his hands held loosely in front of him, nodding now and again in his sleepiness, while at the same time he was living his strongly passive, his open and receptive life. He became conscious of his upturned hands as they lay on his knees and continued to stare at them. The organ played the same theme over and over again. Behind him crashed the heavy blows, and at each of them he winced as if he had himself been hit, until he

was conscious only of his hands and remained sitting stiff, icy, with darkening eyes.

Then he saw it: a large, shining, sharp-cornered nail⁴ through each hand. And the hammer which fell . . . He slipped back, fainting, falling like a bundle down between the chairs. The organ played on as before, but the man who had been repairing the door finished his work, and all was quiet round the senseless man on the floor.

Later a couple of worshippers came in. They lifted him up, moistened his temples with water, and he slowly came round. They led him out and, without actually knowing where he was going, he found his way back to his home.

Easter brought cold and storm from the north, but the sun shone fitfully, in the same way as the clashing of the bells from the chapels and churches sounded intermittently in the gusts of wind. People fought their way across the open fields towards the pealing bells, they butted the air as, bent almost double, they faced the wind.

The chapel of La Joie was a white forest of high coifs. Below them shone the hair-ribbons of the little girls like flowers carpeting a forest. Small boys with large almond-shaped eyes assisted at the altar. They moved heavy books, rang little bells, went to and fro from side to side, bowing each time they passed the Tabernacle.

A man's low, dark head was visible here and there among the high, white coifs of the women. Young girls with light handkerchiefs thrown over their loose hair crowded in the middle aisle. Young men knelt in the crush just inside the door. The cantor sat at the organium, and the youth of the village stood round him singing in simplicity and triumphant joy. They sang in such implicit faith that the doubters believed and the sceptics were set at naught:

*La terre est ouverte,
Le maître est sorti,
La tombe est déserte,
Le voilà! C'est lui,
. . . Jésus Christ vainqueur.*

The veils had been removed from off the faces of the saints. From Saint Peter and Saint Paul, the guardians of the altar, from the mild Saint Anthony of Padua with the child on his arm, from the little Bernadette, from Saint Teresa with her roses, Jeanne d'Arc in her armour. And from Our Lady of Joy herself on her own altar. Her arms were outstretched in welcome to all who drew nigh. The wild chervil from the edges of the road was now a veil for the Virgin Mother, a veil redolent with the perfume of the meadows hovering round her blue and white garment.

Efflam sat down at the end of the church under the bell tower. He opened and shut his hands, while his lips remained tightly closed. This morning, he thought, this morning he no longer felt the nails. The heavenly had broken through the earthly. All was light in light. But Easter Day is followed by Easter Monday, when the believers doubt Easter Monday by other ordinary days when scepticism triumphs. "Father, Father, to-day they are celebrating the Resurrection! To-morrow they will all be in need of a new Saviour."

He pushed his way out through the crowd round the door and went to the wall where a number of men were sitting, dangling their legs. The wind had changed to the north-west, and it was raw and cold. The heavy, grey, driving clouds left a band of blue between them. This clear blue also seemed to be drifting, but the sun suddenly came out over the edge of the cloud. The sea looked more grim than ever, cold, with a hard glitter like zinc, while the horizon was a gloomy, leaden grey. This also drifted and shifted.

Efflam sat with his shoulders slouched and one hand in the other, gazing at the view. His face changed with it from gloomy seriousness and cold glitter to utter dejection. The sky was soon completely overcast by cloud and an even shadow ~~was~~ ^{had} the earth. Efflam lowered his head and, to the surprise of the men who sat nearest to him, he began to mumble:

"Father, tell me what I can do that the joy of the Resurrection shall not pass away! If it is possible, give me a new Good Friday so that they may have a lasting Easter."

"What is he saying?" asked those who sat at the end of the row, and the question went from man to man to Lescantin, who happened to be next to Efflam. The fisherman jumped down from the wall, threw his arms into the air and cried:

"He is praying for a new Good Friday. He wants a Cross. We others are to be turned into apostles. Look, there is the new sacrificial lamb!"

Just as he opened his mouth to begin these scornful remarks, the church door opened and the people streamed out. Among them was Amélie Jegou, who heard what was said. Her eyes, full of surprise and suspicion, wandered from the speaker over the whole row of men until they rested on Efflam, who continued to sit there with one hand in the other, gazing out over the water.

"They're blaspheming," she gasped, her throat dry and rough. She wrapped her fur coat round her and hastened on her way.

The church emptied, also the square outside, the men on the wall went their ways. When Efflam looked up he was alone. Only the green, lichen-covered faces of the figures on the Calvary looked at him. He began to walk, but did not go towards Kervily, but along the path, past the chapel, towards Saint-Fiacre. The wind had swung round towards the west, and although there was no storm, the sea boomed more and more loudly the nearer he got to his goal. He passed the large canning factories, closed for the Feast Day, passed the shops and the small hotels along the main street on one side; on the other the view was open to the shore and the harbour. The booming increased, it became a more and more violent roar, followed by hard thumps. Inside the harbour's long, curved jetty he saw boats with the fishing tackle hanging on the yards. The scum from the breakers was tossed up in sky-high cascades or fell like broad, lightly bubbling torrents over the Cement wall.

His way took him along a narrow street, which slowly rose until it opened out on to a rocky area, a jumble of high, broken blocks. He scrambled over the wall behind the last rows of houses and went out on to the headland itself. He stood as if rooted to the spot, without knowledge of the passage of time.

Beyond the eternal and continuous battle of this bit of coast moved the ocean in evenly rolling waves. Out there were no islands or reefs against which the sea could break. The ocean held sway with a majestic peace which gave calm to the onlooker.

Efflam felt a hand on his shoulder. An unknown person stood by his side.

"Be careful," said the stranger. "You must be very careful just here! The visible waves are not the most dangerous. Do you notice that cross in the rock over there?"

"What does it mean?" asked Efflam, his lips stiff with salt. He stared at the brown iron cross hammered into the rock just in front of him.

"That here the sea hides terrifying and unknown powers. Weather conditions and currents which no one understands can cause it suddenly to attack the land with deep-sea waves, from which there is no escape for anyone who happens to be in the neighbourhood. Do you see that stone there, *av Gadorik*, 'the little chair', an innocent name? Although the eddies are very strong, there are plenty of fish, and people are tempted there with their fishing-rods. Several fishermen have been drowned." The man smiled and pointed to another great rock construction. "Good and evil powers meet there: that is the monk with his breviary, and higher up the Virgin herself with her Child. And here, just in front of you, is *Tal-Ifern*, the gate to hell."

Efflam trembled both from terror and cold, but was not able to move from the spot. The other went on with his story:

"Yes, fishermen who know the coast stand there and fish. People come from far to admire the view. Young couples come here on quiet evenings to see the sunset—suddenly the whole rocky point is deluged by a big wave and he, or those, who stood here are seen no more. Then the sea is calm until people forget what has happened. No one has any idea when the powers of the deep will begin to move. No one knows when it is time for the next great beating of the waves. Therefore 'be careful'!" •

The unknown man went away and disappeared between the isolated granite blocks farther inland. These also were hewn and chiselled into strange shapes, fixed as they were in the monotonous brown earth. Close to them lay a cluster of grey stone houses, all with their blank back wall turned towards the sea. Efflam shuddered again and again as he stood there wet through, his skin smarting, his lips dry. He had not heard anyone coming nor had he heard steps when the man went away. He moved away from the dangerous spot, and, with his eyes fixed on the iron cross, he spoke out into the wind:

"I thank you, Father, because you sent your angel to me. Your

messenger came to warn me. And I was reminded once again that you brought me to this shore so that I could carry out your will and wander on this earth. I will not challenge the powers of the deep, I will obey the warning of your angel and pay attention to the dangers of the great wave."

He drew himself farther and farther away, stumbling and falling over the crevices and prickles until he reached the sea-wall. Then he emerged on to the high ground, where the dragons and other petrified monsters lay bound. He kept himself at some distance from the coast and found his way straight across the parish to his home village in the south.

Guillaume Garrec was anxious. He sensed that the village considered him both as a fool and a weakling, this because he still continued to give free lodging to this stranger. Guillaume could read their thoughts: the boy was well now, why should he not be made to work to earn his board and lodging?—and if he could not do so, would it not be best to ask the authorities to contribute to his support? 'As far as the first is concerned, it certainly looks as if I am a fool,' thought Guillaume, 'but no one knows better than I do how good and willing the young monsieur is. No one knows as well as I do that it is as natural to serve and protect him as it is unnatural to put heavy tools into his hands. As for the second, this matter of asking for help from the authorities is not as simple as outsiders think.' Marie-Suzette and he had discussed it in the darkness of the night when they had heard that Efflam was asleep. His wife maintained that the guest had brought good luck to the family, but in spite of that they had, of course, had extra expenses. A place in the family and a bed to sleep were neither of them of great consequence, nor did the food amount to much. One more mouth made little difference to the big kettle of soup and the enormous saucepan of fish which provided for sixteen children and for sons-in-law and grandchildren. Clothing was the worst item. Much was needed in a neighbourhood where clothes were as important as here. He ought to have other suits as well as Joseph's red one, and shirts and underclothes.

"But I do not like to go to the Mayor with requests for help," whispered Guillaume hoarsely under the quilt. "The authorities

are still keeping a sharp look-out on Monsieur Efflam, and if we come asking them for help, then . . ."

"Yes," puffed Marie-Suzette. "That round gendarme still comes to see me. He was here to-day, but I did not let him speak to the boy. I received him in the shop and immediately gave him a drink."

"There you are. No, I do not like going to the Municipal Offices. If I ask for assistance I am afraid that they will take Efflam away from us and send him to a labour camp. Cannot we ask Blanche to alter my reddish-brown suit?"

"I suppose I've enough put by to go to the tailor and order him a new suit," Marie-Suzette said quite loudly, as she sat up, the bed creaking beneath her. As Blanche had been mentioned, she yawned and went on speaking about Blanche herself. Blanche had said that Gérard would be willing to try Efflam in the carpentering line. "Take him along there to-morrow, Guillaume-Marie. That will stop people talking."

"Oh yes, yes," sighed Guillaume, and he too yawned. "I suppose I'd better take him there to-morrow. He, my best friend, my best comrade."

On the edge of the village, on the road to Trécultré, stood the high, box-like house towards which Guillaume walked with Efflam on the third day after Easter Sunday. The old fisherman was not happy in his mind. He was afraid that he would lose the strange foreign bird who had come to his house and meant so much to them all. It was just a presentiment, for the mother and all the others at home in the family took it for granted that Efflam would give up this job as quickly as all the earlier ones. It had been arranged that he was to come home to them each evening, but a carpenter's workshop contained so many dangerous tools and machines, that in itself was an anxiety. They walked with long, even strides, and Guillaume asked solemnly:

"How are you feeling, my son?" And Efflam smiled, as if it were a joke.

"Well enough, Papa!"

At this the old man became so warmed up and moved that he felt obliged to turn aside and spit vigorously while he rubbed his eye as if he had got something in it. Then he said:

"As long as you don't put your hand into the electrical saw, my dear friend. It's the most dangerous of all."

"I will be very careful and take great care, Monsieur Garrec."

"Thank you, thank you, Efflam. Do not feel troubled if things do not go well. This evening *la dame* will take you to the tailor and choose a new suit. Yes, the old lady knows exactly what she wishes; toothless and fat as she is, she has still a strong will. When you look at Blanche, then you know what she used to be like. Yes, she was quite as fair, she also. Her skin was as clear and her breasts as firm. The black in the family comes from me. From my mother. It is said that at one time small brown men lived here in this land. Small, dark dwarfs, but they were strong, so strong that they took up a menhir as if it were nothing and carried it under their arms. There is both fair and dark in our family. I myself am perhaps not so black-eyed as my mother was and as was my brother, poor dear François, Marie-Jeanne's father. Marie-Jeanne has inherited both the darkness and the gloom, the poor child."

"When Marie-Jeanne is gentle-minded her soul is fair. Even Azenor was not so white and lovely in soul as she is."

"How beautifully you talk, Monsieur Efflam. I do not know who Azenor was, but you speak in such a beautiful way. And I hope that no devilish things like that circular saw—listen, it's working! It cuts through my bones and marrow."

The screeching and wailing of the saw was heard far away coming from the big building they were now approaching. A flight of steps led straight up from the road to the door of the house, which stood by itself, free and unenclosed, with potato-fields and corn-fields right up to it on one side. Guillaume and Efflam turned the corner and splashed through a pool of rain-water between a pile of boards on the one side and small wood-sheds on the gable end of the house. The big, broad door of the carpenter's shop gaped at them from the yard.

The larger building had an entrance and windows at the back also. It was new and thinly built and had broken with the simple rule that a house, like a human being, should have a face, and should be safe from surprises from the outside owing to its ability to be shut up. A row of washing-tables on rickety legs stood by the long wall of the carpenter's shop, showing how many families

lived in the house. Every table had its wooden washing-bowl filled with more or less dirty water. Newly-washed garments fluttering in the breeze hung on a metal rope suspended between a couple of poles. A wide, shallow hole, quite close to the house, contained all its rubbish. There was a free view over the cultivated fields that lay nearest, then across the meadows bordering the shore, with the sea in the distance. There was nothing to shelter the house from the winds from any of the four quarters.

"Good morning, Son in law," shouted Guillaume through the door of the workshop.

Gérard Kérlaëc's round, boyish face appeared in among the sawdust. He turned off the current and the sharp toothed, grey steel wheel stopped. Drying his hands on the back of his trousers, he came forward.

"Good morning, Father in law! Good morning, Monsieur Kelou!"

"I have brought my comrade Gerard. Blanche says that you would like him to try in the workshop."

"I have spoken about it, yes. As long as it does not interfere with anything you have thought of or arranged."

Gérard offered his father-in-law tobacco and looked for Efflam, but the latter was already in the workshop. They saw him bend down to look more closely at the joints of a half-finished cupboard that stood there. He put his first finger on to the woodwork and let it run along the edges. A light came into the eyes of both men.

"Now I must get on with my own work," said the older man. "Listen, Son in law. You will see that nothing happens to him, with the saw or with the other carpenter's tools you have in the shop!"

"I will do my best, Father in law. But do not go yet, Blanche would like you to come in and have a little something."

"No, no, it is too early in the day. I must go and cut a bundle of green fodder for the cow to night. I'll come in on my way home. If there is then a drop of something, I shall perhaps be glad of it."

He went into the big room containing the carpenter's bench and other tools and stretched out his hands. "Now I must leave you, Efflam. Good luck until we meet again!"

They shook hands, and Efflam said seriously

"I hope that I shall be of use, and that Monsieur Kér-la-érec will be satisfied with me."

The man they had been speaking about cleared his throat and coughed discreetly and stood there, his knees shaking nervously now that his father-in-law had gone and he was left alone with his apprentice.

"We can begin by planing this board over here. Now I will show you how to fix it—Oh, I see you have done it already. Is it really firm? Yes, yes, it is. And you hold the plane like this—that's right. And now, carefully . . ."

The carpenter stopped speaking and looked with wonder and surprise at the calm, assured way in which the other man used the tools. Efflam soon stopped and felt the surface he had planed with his finger. Then he looked up.

"What is it to be used for, Monsieur Kér-la-érec? For the frame of a door?"

"Yes," nodded Gérard, not knowing exactly how to continue his instructions. Efflam unscrewed the board, turned it, took a smaller plane and went over the other edge, changed to other tools, sometimes studying the finished frame which was standing close beside him. Kér-la-érec's knees shook more and more nervously, while at the same time he stroked his chin in a satisfied way.

Almost without a word they both worked for a time until, a few hours later, they were surprised by Guillaume's shout from the road outside.

"I hear that you are working. How are you getting on in there?"
 Efflam looked up from the fine carving on which he was now employed, the decoration of the centre panel of the door. Surprised, he looked round; he had forgotten where he was, forgotten the time. Slowly it occurred to him who was this unshaven man, carrying the big bundle of newly-cut grass.

"Monsieur Garrec!" he cried in a joyful voice. Garrec laid the bundle of grass on the pile of boards outside and came nearer. He looked anxiously at his son-in-law. Kér-la-érec nodded silently, taciturn as ever, and went on with his work. Guillaume wrinkled his eyebrows and waited for more precise information, but his daughter called him. Blanche was damping down and soaking the week's washing, and then laying the clothes out in heaps on

the small patches of grass available on the well-trodden, uneven strip of ground between the house and the potato patch. She had her apron bunched round her waist and her hair hanging down her back in a plait. She tramped about in her sabots, big and strong. Now she straddled across one of the deeper pools of water, bent down and emptied her heavy wooden tub so that its grey contents made the pool larger still.

"I have just finished. Everything is put out," she said. "I will wash it this afternoon. Come in, Papa, and taste our 'little Englishmen'*. I have a large saucepan and they are full of meat. Efflam may as well eat his dinner with us, too, if he has finished in the workshop. I must have clean water in my wash-tub; do you think that I could ask him to carry it in for me during the lunch-hour?"

Her father scratched his head uneasily. He was afraid that his large, determined daughter would demand many services from her husband's young assistant. He himself stood in awe of her, and answered evasively:

"It's a long way to your pump, my girl. Efflam never refuses to do a good turn, but it is, of course, a long way to the pump."

"Yes, yes, that's just the reason," answered Blanche impatiently. "I'm in a hurry. I must put up my hair before we eat. Come in, Papa, and have a glass of Quinquina while you are waiting."

Half an hour later Blanche, wearing her coif, sat at the table with the security of a queen. A dish heaped high with little red crabs stood in the middle of the table. She took up a thick, round loaf of bread and pressed it against her chest, cutting broad slices and laying them in heaps on the table. Everybody helped themselves from the dish of 'little Englishmen', and the incessant little sounds of cracking shells were heard in the room. Silently and eagerly they dug out the white meat from the many small compartments with their knives, and now and again they neatly and carefully spat out the membranous dividing-walls which were apt to come away with the flesh and easily found their way in between the teeth. After they had given themselves over entirely to the joy of the food for a little while they began to talk. Guillaume seized his glass of red wine.

* Small crabs.

"Let us drink with Monsieur Efflam. He has had his first great day in the carpenter's shop. *Yec'hed mat*, my friend, *Yec'hed mat!*"

They touched glasses against Efflam's, wishing him good health and good luck. Guillaume looked at his son-in-law and at the young man.

"Tell me, how have things gone? No cuts or pinched fingers, I can see that. Thank God for that. But how have things gone otherwise?"

"Things have gone better than one could have expected," answered Kérlaérec evasively. "It is not easy to say exactly. Empty your glasses and I will fill them up again. Do you want any more, Blanche?"

"Yes, please," answered his wife from the stove, where she was beating an omelette. "A whole glass," she added. "I'm thirsty."

Gérard carefully added a little to her half-filled glass. "You know you can't stand wine," he said.

Blanche hastily took some gulps of the wine. She was gay and grew more and more talkative, and her husband looked at her disapprovingly.

"Take care or you'll begin to laugh!" he said.

"Laugh, of course! I shall laugh! Once a day, Papa, is that too often? Is that too often, Efflam? Once a day I laugh for a little while. After that I become all the sadder."

Blanche laughed as she had said, laughed uncontrollably, and the others laughed with her. Her father, however, soon grew serious.

"What makes you sad, my girl?" he asked.

"Oh, only about life in general. Yes, just life as it is. But now ~~give~~ ^{give} me a little more wine, Gérard!"

"No, Blanche! Look, Monsieur Efflam hasn't even drunk his first glass yet. You must learn from him."

"Efflam does not care very much for our strong everyday wine. He ought to have Bordeaux," put in Guillaume. Blanche laughed as before until the tears ran down her cheeks.

"Ha, ha, ha! Bordeaux, you say, Papa? You have always said before that Bordeaux is nothing but medicine. Hospital wine, you used to call it! As a matter of fact, it is a good thing that Efflam drinks so sparingly, it will be cheaper for me. Also he will

be more ready to fetch water from the pump. I shall like having a real prince carrying water for me. No one else in the village has that. What do you say, Prince? Will you take the buckets and go and fetch my water?"

Efflam got up, asking to be excused so as to fetch the water. He went immediately to the pump. The lady of the house sat down to her needlework. The intoxication of the light red wine was already over and was followed by the depression which made her silent and cussed. The carpenter himself washed up as usual, and then he and Guillaume went out and stood in front of the laundry-tables, smoking. Now and again Kér-laérec looked at the clock. He kept punctually to his set hours, allowing himself exactly an hour and a half for his lunch. Efflam came back carrying the two grey zinc pails, full to the brim, and emptied them into the tub at their side. Guillaume shook his head and said:

"Now perhaps you will become a carpenter, my friend. You will perhaps become a craftsman like so many others. And wait on the women as we all do. But keep your spirits up, my friend, keep your spirits up! And St. Anne be with you and St. Joseph, Holy St. Joseph, who was a good and honest carpenter. These good and holy men and women can give us a great deal of help if we only dare believe in them. And, Efflam, you have given me back my faith again. If only you would help my child, Blanche, and ease her mind. Look at her sitting at the window as heavy as if she were made of stone. Yet she has an excellent husband. She has a talented daughter, whom she can afford to keep at a good school in Quimper. She has her own cheque-book and she has good clothes. She has just bought a fine, new, fur cape. She goes to church . . ."

Efflam went off with the empty pails, and the old man went on philosophising while he looked at the young woman in the window. The Kér-laérecs lived in the lower flat, where they had two rooms to the left of the entrance. In the other half lived the fisherman, Le Floch, and his wife. There were women bending over their work in the small attic windows also. But the windows of the middle floor were black and curtainless, for the two rooms above the Kér-laérecs had just become empty; and two foreign artists had just moved into the other flat on the middle landing and had

immediately unhooked the curtains from the high, narrow windows.

Guillaume, who had for a time allowed his mind to wander aimlessly, now came back in thought to his daughter.

"She goes to church," he repeated, "and still she is depressed. The Sacraments give her neither comfort nor security. How is that, Son-in-law? Is the Faith as weak all over France as it is here?"

"I don't know how it has happened, Father-in-law. But I know that what you say is true. We don't really believe in anything. Right inside us we believe neither in God nor the world, neither in good nor in evil, although we hold on to this thing and that—I don't know why. Just to have something to do and make the time pass, I suppose. They say that among the cultured and learned there are many who go to church and who take it all seriously. Yes, I understand that the churches in Paris are almost always full . . . but as for us others! Life has become so strange that it needs knowledge and wisdom to hold a simple faith. Ah—here comes my new apprentice again. There's plenty of water now and it is two o'clock—if you will excuse us, Father-in-law . . ."

Efflam came carrying the pails, and Guillaume's face lit up. He took the bundle of grass from the heap of planks where he had laid it down, shouldered it and went towards home.

Efflam's long, pliable hands with their wide span between finger and thumb closed firmly and naturally round the different tools. They lifted boards and lathes with confidence, and his fingers passed sensitively over the wood. These same hands joined, glued and sandpapered, they filed and polished. Gérard Kérlaéc'ec looked at his assistant with suspicion and fear in his eyes rather than satisfaction. It was almost as if his apprentice had stood at a carpenter's bench before. In fact, it seemed more than likely. It made Kérlaéc'ec feel uneasy—uncomfortable. It was like having a ghost in the workshop. He himself was a taciturn sort of man, who liked others to start a conversation, but as Efflam was even more silent there was scarcely a word spoken the whole day through except what was necessary in their work. This gave the workshop, with its disconcerting beams of sun and dust, a stranger atmosphere than ever.

As time went on, however, the women's taut and gloomy faces seemed to grow a little more gentle. Now and again Madame Le Floch, looking from her open window into the yard, moved her lips tentatively as if a smile were on its way. Now and again Blanche down on the right, as well as fisherman Goeffry's wife with her young sister up under the roof, smiled when they saw Eflam coming with the water-pails and the wood or standing with his back towards the house, looking at the gently sloping ploughed lands, across the green fields to the blue sea. He was so straight, his shoulders so easy, his bearing as free as it was proud. The wind stroked the long soft hair, and several women's hands longed to do the same. The only one who always turned her back and would never allow herself to soften was the little widow Stéphan, as brown and hard as a nut, who, with her two children, lived in the flat under the roof next to the Goeffry's.

On Saturday the house woke up to greater liveliness as the fishermen stayed at home and came and went between the harbour and their homes. Lucienne, the Kérlaérecs' daughter, arrived from Quimper with the bus, bringing her week's washing in a bundle and her lesson books in a sail-cloth bag. Her broad Garrec face was surrounded by the reddish, curly hair of the Kérlaérec family. She had her father's thin, nervous limbs; her fingers and knees were in continual motion whilst she rubbed her elbows against the oil-cloth in the kitchen and worked at her verbs and dates, munching bread and butter.

At midday Kérlaérec announced that he had done enough work for the week, and Eflam went off towards home, past the pump close to the first of the older houses, where the village really began to thicken. The big Quimper bus was standing close to the Drezens' house, and the landlord himself appeared. With his long body and large head he looked like a kneeling wrestler. One leg was only half as long as the other, and this accounted both for his odd appearance and for the fact that Madame Drezen was more dominant in her family than women generally were. She also ruled the house in which Eflam lived and which belonged to the Drezens.

The bus moved away, and the place seemed empty without it. The grey, pale man brought his arm up in a big, sweeping gesture and saluted Eflam.

"Good-day, Monsieur. If I am not mistaken, you are Kér-la-érec's new assistant. A lovely day, isn't it? How are you getting on? What's your name, Monsieur? I have heard it, I expect, but have forgotten."

Madame Drezen had let her crochet sink down on to her lap and was gazing thoughtfully after the departing bus. She listened vaguely to her husband's vague words and gestures, and now she looked at him in a condescending manner.

"His name is Kelou," she said. "Is not that so, Monsieur? Is it not also true that Monsieur is one of those exiled princes who have to earn their own living? I don't really know. I am only speaking from hearsay."

"They call me Prince Efflam, Madame. But I am not here as an exile. I am here at my father's bidding."

The landlord came nearer with a long hop, skip and jump. His movements were not unlike Marie-Jeanne's, but he was more crippled, older and clumsier. He burst out:

"Oh, is that what it is! The Prince is here as an emissary. Or perhaps as a student? Under an assumed name, of course. So that no one knows from whence he comes or over which country his father rules."

"How stupidly you talk," sneered his wife. "Go in and make out those bills." Then she looked at the young man sideways with her sharp, dark eyes and said:

"If you are staying here for any length of time studying, surely you need your own place to live in. There is an empty flat, small, only two rooms, in the house over there—on the same landing and just opposite those foreigners. They are also students."

"I live with my foster-father Garrec. I don't know if I shall need other rooms, Madame Drezen."

"No, no, I meant nothing. But just in case, *Monsieur le Prince . . .*"

Efflam went on towards his home and was greeted by happy shouts of welcome when he appeared. The little girls were dancing round their father, who had just returned. The perfume of lilac filled the kitchen, the bedroom and the shop, but the fumes of onion and fish, coming from the saucepan on the stove, blended with the lilac. Buanic freed himself from the children's arms, took hold of the bottle and filled up everyone's glass.

"Here's your glass, Prince Efflam! To-day it is Monsieur Buanic who is standing drinks. How have you got on with brother-in-law Gérard?"

Efflam sat down by the door, where he generally sat. He opened a paper parcel which he had been carrying in his hand and unfolded notes of 100 and 1,000 francs and laid them in two heaps, one on each knee. There was silence in the kitchen, everyone watching him without speaking. When he had finished, he took one of the heaps and handed it to Marie-Suzette, with the words:

"Madame—please accept this."

She looked at the notes, looked at her own fat, sweaty hands, dried them on her apron and then hesitantly took the bundle of dirty paper. Then a shout rose from several throats:

"Have you been paid, Efflam?"

He smiled and nodded while putting the second bundle of notes under him on the chair for safe keeping. There was silence as before, but a heavier silence. At last Le Lay said:

"Well, well, if he has been of use he should of course receive a wage, but it seems as if Madame Blanche has been more generous than she usually is towards her husband's apprentices."

Guillaume cleared his throat, then cleared his throat again and found it difficult to keep his voice steady.

"Monsieur Efflam is no apprentice," he said. "Blanche and Gérard have both said that he is as good as a fully qualified carpenter. 'As a fully qualified carpenter,' they said. Actually more sure of hand than Gérard himself."

The old man lifted his glass and tossed it to his mouth, only to discover to his disappointment that it was empty. He put it down with a bang, thumped the table and burst out:

"It is actually so, that my friend Efflam is a clever carpenter. He is to work as an expert craftsman. He will have his Saturday money like everyone else, with more notes than most of us. He'll have to wait on the women. He'll bring them money for their housekeeping. He'll go from home at a set time every morning." Guillaume stretched out his arm.

"Oh, Monsieur, how good it is that you have success! Oh, Efflam, my friend, but it was better still when you lived here as our honoured guest, free as a bird."

Marie-Suzette sighed deeply over there by the stove. The daughters' hands flew quicker than ever with thread and crochet-hook. Le Lay gazed now at the floor, now at his father-in-law, and rubbed his cheeks as if he wished to force his facial muscles to keep still. A tear rolled down Buanic's cheek, and he did not seem ashamed of it. Even the little girls were infected by the tensivity of the general atmosphere and felt sad. Bernadette hid her face awkwardly against her father. Eliane looked from one to the other, questioning, wondering. Then this deep, but incomprehensible, sorrow, that they would no longer have a real prince living with them, came over her too. No longer would there be anyone living in their home in the manner of the lilies of the field. Eliane therefore went straight to the point as was her wont. She went and laid her hand on Efflam's knee and looked up into his face.

"Is it true? Is it true?" she cried. "Is it true that you are a craftsman and that you have stopped being a prince? Efflam, is it true? Say that it is not true!"

He looked at her, smiling until her anxious eyes responded. "But, Eliane," he said, "do you not remember what we have spoken about so often: a crown that is hidden? Yes, it is still there, it is only laid aside."

He looked around absent mindedly, but the child's eyes did not leave his face.

"Are you still a prince? The whole time, Efflam?"

"I am a son of man. A workman," he was thinking aloud.

"A craftsman? A carpenter?" she asked, still seeking, not yet fully satisfied.

"Yes," he said, "a craftsman, a carpenter. The mistress of the house needs money for all her expenses. And Aunt Marie, who is a poor widow, needs help. But the crown, Eliane! There is a crown somewhere."

"Oh, the crown!" she said joyously, and let go of his knee, clapping her hands. "You have a crown, Efflam, now I am happy. I am happy again, Efflam!" And she danced out and away through the sunlight into the road.

The others remained behind dejectedly in the kitchen, where it was already growing dark. The last rays of the sun found their way through the open door and shone on Efflam. They noticed

that the bright red suit, which had lately been so clean, had had time to get spotty, and the light had bleached the stuff unevenly. His hair with the sun upon it was not quite black, but shone like copper and had also red lights in it.

Now the light touched his hands. The long, narrow hands, supple, but also gnarled and burnt by the sun. These—these—yes, these carpenter's hands! To whom did they really belong? In spite of everything, this silent guest was no ordinary person.

After supper Efflam went out into the village carrying a bunch of Buanic's lilies and holding his second bundle of notes. The beams of the lighthouse lit up the walls of the houses. He felt depressed and wandered along, making for his goal in a round-about way as usual.

The dejected atmosphere in the family kitchen, where they had been so deeply disappointed, had at first acted like a suffocating, over-friendly hug, leaving him fumbling uncertain and lonely. He seemed suddenly to lose all his lines of communication with the power which gave to his life a mystic and tremendous meaning. The disappointment the others felt had also robbed him of the childish joy he had felt in the work ever since he had first taken hold of a carpenter's tool.

Then Eliane had come with her demand:

"Tell me, are you still a prince, Efflam?" Then in her tear-filled eyes he saw something that reminded him of a shining crown. 'In the eyes of innocent children my heaven is reflected,' he thought. In them his crown shone and glimmered. Her cry followed him and was repeated with the rhythmic return of the strong beam of light at stated intervals: "Ah, the crown!"

In the darkness that came when the beams of light travelled on and were turned from him, he heard his own serious: "A workman."

The crown—a workman—he entered Marie Le Donche's house, laid the flowers on the table and handed the bundle of notes to the widow. She looked at them without taking them.

"What are these?" she asked suspiciously.

"Joseph sends them to you," he answered.

"Joseph——?" Her face twitched painfully, but she pressed her lips together. She had not yet touched the money. Marie-

Jeanne stood a little way from them with her work, watching her mother and the guest.

"It's from Joseph," she repeated almost soundlessly. Then her voice rose:

"Accept the gift, Maman! It pleases Efflam to be able to do something that poor Joseph would have done if he——" She broke off and swallowed, gripped by the memory of her dead brother and, as always, full of emotion when Efflam was near her.

The older woman now took the bundle of notes and laid it hastily to one side. She also swallowed. She pulled out a chair from the table.

"Sit down, Monsieur; are you still working?"

"I work with Gérard Kérlaérec."

"Are you still going on with him?" Marie Le Donche asked shortly and sternly, as if she were examining him. Efflam answered meekly and calmly:

"Yes, Madame."

"Have you earned this money yourself?"

"Madame Kérlaérec paid me before I left to-day."

Marie-Jeanne burst out anxiously:

"Why are you asking all these questions, Maman? Surely you do not believe that Efflam has——"

"I believe anything about living people. On the other hand, I do not believe all we are told about the dead. Not even about my poor Joseph, who lies in his grave and who in life was never able to send me a penny, however much he wished to do so. No, I do not even believe that the saints themselves can do anything but wait for the Resurrection. I believe in God and on His word. Before the war there was a preacher down in the harbour café, and all he said about superstition and the worship of images was most sensible. No, the dead have no power, but one can expect anything of the living. Therefore I want to know whether Efflam has earned his money in an honest way."

Marie-Jeanne listened with shame and sorrow, and she asked:

"Why do you talk like that to our friend? I know that you have been in a bad temper all day because I did not bring back the payment for our thread gloves and you have no money for the electricity. Now, here comes Efflam with just what you need, but instead of being glad you give him bitter words. St. Teresa

also had to take some of your bitterness. See here, Efflam, it happened while Maman was cleaning the room, and she was glad she did it, she said. Look!"

Marie-Jeanne stood with the body of her statue in one hand, the head in the other.

"Marie Le Donche is a witch and a heretic," said Efflam. And Marie was silent for a moment in face of this unexpected statement, said in a calm, almost indifferent, tone of voice. Marie-Jeanne forgot in her consternation the broken saint, laid it carefully aside and looked from the one to the other, both standing on either side of the big table in the middle of the room.

"Are you calling my mother a witch and a heretic, Efflam?"

"Marie Le Donche is one of those who always believes that there is better food in other people's dishes."

The young girl looked at him, sadly agreeing. She took up her ball of thread, but stood without going on with her work. The cheek-bones of the older woman moved. She tried several times to look up over her spectacles, but her eyes always turned aside from her guest's. Then she sighed and began to talk. It was as if she were both giving an explanation and speaking in her own defence:

"I have always been poor. When I married your dear father, Marie-Jeanne, we began with five francs each and were obliged to find all that we needed ourselves. It was not with François as with his brother, Guillaume, who received both a house and a field when he married. Both of us were equally poor. I had begun at nine years old in the canning factory, and came home wet up to the armpits with salt water and fish refuse. At that time it was different in the factories, there was fish refuse everywhere. There was no question of going to school, and we had no light except the feebly flickering glow from the seaweed fire. We began early and stayed on late into the night. I was nine years old . . . wet up to the armpits . . ."

"Poor little Marie! Poor little Marie!" said Efflam, and the woman broke off and looked at him. He looked sympathetically at her, and she stopped speaking. He had never before looked at her so straight, and she had never before realised how clear his glance was—how penetrating—how good.

"Yes, poor little Marie," she repeated mechanically, but not

now as if she were speaking about herself, but about an entirely different person. "Poor little Marie," she said again, smiling and with tears of gaiety and feeling. "Yes, I remember," she went on, "how, in my childhood, we used to burn seaweed. It was the only fuel. And then there was a big stream running through the village, and there we rinsed the salt out of the seaweed, and after that it had to be dried. The white band-seaweed burnt the best. Monsieur must have noticed that some of the seaweed is white or yellowish? It shone clearer than the lamp here. But what a nuisance it was when we had a fire with it! It was as if there were fireworks in the stove." She laughed heartily at the memory. Marie-Jeanne kept herself in the background. She had settled down to her work as before.

"There was a great deal more fish than now, wasn't there, Maman?" she asked.

"Yes, there was much more fish. The lobsters there were! I've never seen anything like it. We ate those ourselves." She sighed, both at the thought that the old days were so poor and on the other hand that they had passed away for ever. "Yes, yes, there was a great deal more fish then, but there were not many buyers who gave the high prices for sole and lobster that are given now. Now we daren't touch them. They vanish away like smoke. I remember when my father came back with twelve live lobsters and let them out on to the floor, and they crawled about and the children played with them. Until they went into the saucepan, of course . . ."

"Happy little Marie," said Efflam, and he also smiled. They smiled to each other as if they had memories in common, but the smile faded slowly on Marie Le Donche's face, and it became hard and angular again.

"Yes, my father was only a poor fisherman like all the family have been, like all the others here who come and go. When Monsieur came we thought he was a grander person. A prince, they said, whom my daughter had saved from the sea. Now—you are just a carpenter working for your living like all the rest of us." She finished, and a silence fraught with the greyness of disappointment and disillusionment filled the room.

Efflam's face lost its mild, dreaming expression. For the second time this evening he fumbled for something to take hold of in the

vacuum surrounding his person. For the second time the joy of successful work was taken from him. The bundle of notes he had brought still lay under the salt-box on the mantelpiece, where Marie Le Donche had put it after taking it from his hands without a word of thanks. He looked appealingly at Marie-Jeanne. Then he got up, and said in a tone of voice in which the young girl detected the agony:

"I must go, Marie-Jeanne!"

She got up immediately and put the shawl round her. "It's beginning to get foggy. I hear the fog-sirens. I am going with Efflam, Maman," she said.

"Not farther than to the porch door," answered the girl's mother sternly. Marie-Jeanne was silent. As she went, she looked at the pieces of the broken saint, caught them up impulsively and took them with her.

The fog made even the nearest street-lamps red and faint. It was as if the darkness itself was impregnated with dampness which laid itself close round their faces. Marie-Jeanne burst out with feverish gaiety:

"I know you'll find the way, Efflam! St. Anne go with you!"

He was silent, looking around him, recoiling from the thick, wet darkness, through which the hoarse bellowing of the siren cut its way and which made the grey gables of the houses look grim and ghostly. Then his glance fell on her white coif, which defied the misty rain and darkness. Her clear blue shawl seemed now to be as black as the free, loose sleeves of her velvet blouse. Inside the white lower edges her wrists shone a faint brown. She held her little statue tightly.

"Efflam, what shall I do with St. Teresa?"

"Give her flowers as before."

"But her head, Efflam? What shall I do with her head?"

"Lay it with the roses at her feet. Like a large new rose. The saints adorn themselves with suffering like you with pearls and silk."

"Thank you," she half-whispered as before, with a trembling laugh in her voice. "I shall do as you say. It will help me to be more unselfish because—because I too want ornaments other than silk and pearls. I will pray for such things as adorn the soul. For goodness, Efflam. I thought—I pondered when you came with

your gift, when you came as an ordinary worker who had received his little wage—then I thought that your kingliness shone more lovely than ever. That is your adornment, Efflam. Good-night, Prince Efflam!”

She stood as before, pressing the broken saint to her breast, and he bent down and kissed her in a brotherly way on both cheeks.

“I’m going, Marie-Jeanne. I’m going the way which has been ordained for me.”

He went. Without being able to see his hand in front of him, he walked securely with clogs that sang hard and strong against the cobbled stones of the old street. With trembling, long-drawn wails, like the common sighing of the whole creation, the siren broke the stillness. The sounds penetrated Efflam’s soul and enlarged his heart to supernatural faith and strength.

CHAPTER TEN

EFFLAM KEIOU WAS A WORKMAN, an artisan, who went from home every morning at a definite time, and on Saturdays brought his bundle of notes to *la dame* of the house, and to Marie-Jeanne’s mother. And after the midday meal, while the tools rested and Gérard Kér-la-érec stood smoking and meditating on life in general, Efflam ran errands for Madame Blanche, who in consequence had all the more time for sitting brooding at her window. Only in the evenings and on Sunday was he free to wander along the shore of that sea which even now was so present everywhere as it lay there shining like a continuation of the lowland, over which it spread itself with its seaweed and its thunder. It was only in the workshop, where the sawdust and the glue and corroding acids and fat oils spread their odours, that the sea was kept at its distance, while the saw whirled and howled and the lathe hummed, and the planes and drills panted zealously.

Kér-la-érec received many unexpected orders. New houses were rising everywhere in the parish, and when the bricklayers had finished with the grey stone walls, the carpenter was called in to complete the work with intermediate ceilings and floors and

windows and doors. These orders demanded that he should be away from home a great deal, and he found it all the more fortunate that he had an assistant. He was never able to free himself quite from an indefinite fear that accidents might happen either in the workshop or in the family while he himself was away. These fears made him all the more surprised at how well things went both daily and from time to time, and he was also delighted that the work on the big cupboards and other pieces of furniture always went forward and that they were finished even better than if he had done them himself.

One evening when Efflam came home to the Garrecs' house, he found Guillaume sitting with his arms hanging loosely and an open letter in his hand. His face was distorted by spasmodic weeping. Rose stood with her arms round her father's neck, mingling her tears with his. Marie-Suzette was on the meat-bench with a grandchild on each side and the third and smallest, Odile, hidden against her voluminous breasts. She was not really crying, she was like a deep sea in which strong under-currents had begun to work, now and then sending up a strong wave on which the three grandchildren were shaken and then burst out into sobs. Marie-Louise and Marie-Pierre had thrown their arms round each other, weeping and sighing. The sister-in-law and her children were there and the youngest, Caroline, was crouched at her uncle's feet. Marie Le Donche sat as always stiff and stern at her work, but her eyes were red-rimmed behind her spectacles. Marie-Jeanne went on with her work. Her expression was softer than usual, but no one could say whether she had wept or not.

It was she who first noticed Efflam as he stood amazed, looking from one to the other. She rose and limped a few steps towards the door.

"Efflam, we are in deep sorrow," she said, and lifted her eyes towards him. Then Guillaume over by the table burst out as he stretched out his arms:

"Yes, Efflam, we are in great sorrow. Oh, Efflam, our dear friend, there is sorrow in the family."

Marie Suzette rose, and as when a dam leaves her sucking young, letting them fall back each in their own direction, so her little grandchildren fell back around her. "Efflam," she cried, "come and comfort us. We need your help!" But she herself was

so far composed that she was able to lift the cover of the saucepan and stir the soup.

Efflam stayed where he was, just inside the threshold where Marie-Jeanne had met him. He stood with his arms round her small, low shoulders. They saw him squeeze up his eyelids hard and painfully. 'Now he knows all about it,' thought Guillaume and the daughters. All of them were strangely comforted, ready to let their tears flow again, but soothingly, like rain on soil already softened and receptive. Marie Le Donche's face, however, became harder and more bitter, and her inner agitation, which was more like anger than anything else, rose up in her and thrust aside the sorrow she had hitherto shared with the others. She could not take her eyes from those long fingers pressed against her daughter's back, against the hump itself, while the poor girl hid herself in him—the man—as if at last she also could weep.

'He knows all about it, he is sorrowing with us,' thought Guillaume and the others. Marie-Pierre drew herself away from her younger sister's arms and pointed at Efflam with her first finger stretched out:

"If only he had been there it would never have happened!" she burst out. "Our poor brother-in-law would still be alive."

Marie-Louise blew her nose and suddenly stopped weeping, now that she no longer had anyone to lean against. She said:

"How you do talk, Marie-Pierre! How could Efflam have prevented it? But he can be a great comfort to us all here!"

Rose sighed and continued to sob against her father's sharp, bristly cheek, but she also suddenly stopped and stepped forward with her hands pressed against her temples:

"Oh, Maman, I cannot bear that nauseating smell of soup any longer! Why do we always have to have leeks in it?"

Once again Marie-Suzette's breasts rose and sank with her weeping. Then she scanned the slim body of her younger daughter, and her face showed a strange, sinister satisfaction when she said:

"That's right, Rose Galvez. I have been waiting to see whether you and Corentin were living as you should with one another, or whether you had taken to the unnatural habits of certain other people. It is as it should be that young married people should breed and bring children into the world. Then if it pleases Our

Lord to fetch one or more of them there are others to fill the gap!"

At these words Guillaume began to sob again:

"Oh, the poor Paul Kérouant! Our poor Lucie, my poor child . . . !"

Efflam was still standing on the threshold with his arms round Marie-Jeanne's shoulders, but his confused glance went from the one to the other. Now he looked sympathetically at Guillaume and asked:

"Who is Paul Kérouant, Monsieur?"

The old man stretched out his arms over the head of Caroline, who was still sitting at his feet. "My dear Efflam, have we never spoken of our daughter and son-in-law in Toulon? About Lucie? She is a couple of years younger than Marie-Louise. One of her children has always been delicate, she tells us—it is a boy—the only boy in the family. And now she has lost the husband whom God gave her."

Guillaume waved the letter wearily. He rose and stretched himself and then began to expound his philosophy:

"Yes, life is like that, Efflam. We have all to leave it some time or other, so if we leave this earthly vale of tears a little sooner or a little later—what matter! But come right in, Efflam. You need a little drop of something after the day's toil. And so do I. And you also, Rose, my daughter. I thought I heard your mother hint at something . . . Well, well, so the good sailor's leave has not been in vain. As the poor boy has to be away from you so much, I can well understand that he wants to use the short time he has with you all the better. And now I think your mother had better give you a drop of something. She should offer it both to you and to your old father, and then, of course, and first of all, to our friend Efflam, who is always such a comfort to us all."

Lucie, the only one of the Garrec daughters who lived away from her home district, wished to come back to her father's house with her children. Paul Kérouant was also a Breton, but he was in the navy and had been stationed at the Arsenal in Toulon. It was from there that the message about his death had come, and they were now expecting his widow and her two children to arrive back in Kervily any day. No one knew where she could be housed, and they continually talked it over among themselves.

It was Sunday morning and the sons-in-law were all at home. Yves sat with his father-in-law in the kitchen, both of them straddling their legs round a big barrel of potatoes. Guillaume peeled them neatly and skilfully, but the lorry-driver worked clumsily and could not get his hands to wield the knife as they should. His father-in-law laughed at him while his eyes were still wet: they had just been weeping together over the death in the South of France. Guillaume began again:

"Oh, my poor Lucie, the poor woman, where shall we now find her the house room she needs when she comes with her children? . . . My dear Yves, you are no fisherman, no sailor, the way you're peeling those potatoes. You have never had to peel for a whole crew."

"Oh, come now, Father-in-law," bickered Yves good-humouredly. "It's the bad-tempered Finisterre women who have taught all of you to become women instead of men, and that is the reason why you're so handy in the house. Out there on the boats—oh, I have seen the sort of messes they cook on board. No, no, one has to go inland to see and learn——"

Yves broke off and pointed the jack-knife at Efflam, where he sat leaning over the table, alone in the shadow under the attic stairs.

"As for you, Monsieur, I have not yet decided what dialect you speak. I've not had much chance, you speak so seldom. No doubt it suits a prince not to chatter away in season and out of season like some of us do, but——"

This time the talkative man was interrupted by Rose shouting from the shop:

"Oh, Maman, can't you stop that parrot talking! How will Lucie get on at home if she has to listen to all those lectures every Saturday and Sunday, she who is so full of sorrow?"

"Madame has gone to church," Guillaume answered his daughter. "Why don't you shut the shop and come in here, Rose? After all, it's Sunday, and by now everyone must have finished buying what they forgot to get yesterday. Come and listen to Yves, I always think he talks so pleasantly. His stories will distract our poor Lucie. Efflam also likes listening, don't you, my good comrade?"

Efflam moved his head and looked past the two men. He

thought he saw a woman standing there, shutting out the light—she had a child in her arms. Her eyes were fixed on him reproachfully. The vision persisted until he heard Guillaume's low, friendly voice:

"Well, well, we have almost finished this lot, Son-in-law. I think there is only peel left in the pail. Efflam, how silent you are, sitting there under the stairs. Your heart is heavy, I can see that. I should be so glad to ease your mind, but Marie-Jeanne ought to be here. She can do it more easily than I can."

Yves took up the bucket and threw the peel and the water out into the road. "It will always fill up some hole or other," he said when he came back again. He added sympathetically: "It doesn't suit a prince to be depressed. You should ask Gérard for a free day and come out on a trip with me again. You should have seen what I saw out there on the slopes towards Châteaulin! There were glades as blue as the sky on a June day. I had to stop in the middle of a hill to look, and do you know what it was, Prince? Hyacinths, monsieur, hyacinths, whole fields of them!"

"Why did you not bring home blue hyacinths to your wife, Buanic?" asked Efflam.

The other laughed as he walked round laying the table, from which Efflam had been forced to move. Yves held the pile of plates against his chest and put out one at a time on to the table, talking while he did so:

"No, no, Monsieur. If I had come back with the whole field of blue hyacinths you would have taken most of it off to Marie-Jeanne, for all has to be given away, all has to be passed on. If one is royal, one receives all and gives all."

"Yes," answered Efflam with conviction, while he arranged the spoons and forks the other had thrown down on to the table, "I should have given the blue hyacinths to Marie-Jeanne. She should have had them all, Buanic. And St. Teresa would have had them and would have given them back to the children of earth. . . . Buanic, I am sorry that you did not bring home the blue hyacinths."

Yves stood with his arms bent as if he still held plates, although he had put down the last one. With half-open mouth he listened to Efflam as the latter stood and stretched out a spoon and fork and talked, not noticing the third person who had come up to the

threshold and scraped his foot and stared under his heavy eyebrows. Jehan Lescantin had meant to come in, but he was stopped by the voice. He spat and swore and was about to turn round, but something within him said: "Are you turning round because you are a coward? Don't let that fool in there think that he has any power over you."

"Monsieur Buanic, my friends, my brothers and sisters, all that you give away out of the love of your hearts, and especially all you give to the ugly and the evil, to the dwarfs and witches of this world—and to the useless, all will return to you as solacing blue dew upon your dried-up hearts. Then the grey desert of your heart will begin to shine like a blue field, like the sky on a June day."

Jehan Lescantin was no longer alone, for the churchgoers had returned and the whole family and people from the neighbourhood had collected. The women had formed a half-circle round the fisherman where he stood in his old rust-red Sunday suit. Now he threw up his short, crooked arms.

"Ha, ha, now you see that all I have ever said is coming true! There He stands, He for whom you have all been waiting—the Messiah, the Saviour! He who is to lead us out into the blue fields. Blue fields, ha, ha! Turn aside, women, give place, for here comes the Apostle of the Lord!"

Lescantin pushed his way out of the crowd of women, who turned and looked after him with surprise. Then all the high, white caps were turned inwards towards the open kitchen door. Efflam came towards them with outstretched arms and with a fork in one hand and a spoon in the other. "The table is laid," he said, and drew aside so that those who belonged to the house might come in. Then he turned to the father of the house, who had not yet pulled himself together after all he had been hearing.

"Monsieur Garrec," said Efflam, "Lucie is coming, and she must have the bed which you have been kind enough to lend me."

Guillaume felt the tears coming. With averted eyes he said:

"Monsieur Efflam, you speak as if you did not belong to the family. As if you were not one of us. That hurts me. I thought that you were happy here."

"Lucie is coming, Monsieur, and she needs a home."

"Yes, yes, my friend, my daughter is seeking a home. She

will certainly be welcome. But you must not make us sad by leaving us. Just now we need you more than ever. Do you not need us, Efflam?"

"I am going to move," answered Efflam thoughtfully and absent-mindedly, with his gaze far out on the road. While the others sat down at the table he went out of the house, still holding his spoon and fork. The wind ruffled his hair as he turned round the windy corner by the Jegous'. Guillaume sighed:

"Efflam has gone just as we were all of us sitting down to table. I am anxious about him. He says so many strange things which I cannot understand."

Yves Buanic had been silent longer than usual, but he now found his tongue again, drew a deep breath and said:

"Now I have heard him making a speech, but I was so taken up with what he said about dwarfs and witches that I forgot to pay attention to the rest of what he said."

Marcel Le Lay laughed. "Oh, you were, were you? Ha, ha, ha! That shows that the speech was pretty good. A man like that should be turned into a speaker for something or other, if someone would only take the trouble to instruct him in some particular subject and send him round the country."

"That would not suit our Efflam," said Guillaume seriously. "Efflam, who is so pious, who is so—so—yes, something in me says that he is a man whom Our Lord could use."

"Something in me says also that he belongs to the sort of people who can be used," said Le Lay. His eyes met those of the older man, and they both looked slyly down at their plates and took up their forks.

Jehan Lescantin stopped at the cross-roads in the middle of the village, where some men were standing about in the shelter of the wall of a house. His shoulders were more bent forward than most of the men's so that his restless hands might stretch right down into the pockets of his sack-like trousers while he listened to the other men's remarks and questions and to the answers that were given after a suitable interval had passed. Lescantin was restless. He often took a step out from the road and looked down the main road towards the harbour, and then he would slouch over to the corner and take a look towards the

lighthouse A storm was brewing down in that dangerous corner in the south-west. The lighthouse stood up out of a grey bunch of clouds, which wrapped themselves round it like a feather boa round a neck.

'There'll be bad weather again,' he thought 'Bad weather and very little work out there on the seaweed banks, and the hell of a business to get what little we harvest dragged back to land. It might have been better for me to keep to my fishing.'

He pricked up his ears. He heard the well known tramp of wooden shoes. Yes, he was right. There he was, just emerging from one of the older streets of the village. The fisherman tightened his lips and pressed his chin down against his chest in a stubborn effort to keep his eyes on the ground, but they would move upwards, although his brows were carefully drawn together. He was, however, determined to suppress his agitation. He would not speak, he would not—

Efflam had now passed and Lescantin contentedly drew his hands out of his pockets and kicked a stone in a self confident way. As he heard the foot-steps grow fainter and fainter beyond the corner of the house he arrogantly looked once more down the main road after the man who had just passed. Black hair ruffled by the breeze, a red back, shod like everyone else—but what was the madman carrying in his hands. A spoon and fork! That was too much for Lescantin. As he turned to his comrades along the wall he gave a shout of laughter, but in the same breath, while his mouth was still open from his loud 'Ha, ha', powers that he did not comprehend took control of him and "spoke through him."

"There he goes!" shouted Lescantin brandishing his arms. "There he goes with his spoon and fork. To feed us! To give to each one according to his needs! Food and drink in plenty! Why are we anxious about the morrow when the Messiah himself is among us, and when He can invite us to visit His blue meadows!"

"You are a splendid orator, Jehan," said someone in the group. "Whoever he may be, he has found a good supporter in you. Tell us a little more before we have to go home to dinner."

Efflam followed the road to the lighthouse with its head hidden

in a grey bunch of clouds. It grew cold and raw under the low clouds, which pressed the dampness downwards. Efflam was walking on an empty stomach and was therefore soon frozen to the bone. He stood there shivering and wondering why he was there and where he was going. The wind was whistling in the telegraph-wires above his head, and there was a rustling and a blustering when it went to work with the stuff of his own clothing. He was after all accustomed to all these sounds, but he suddenly heard a new little scraping and scratching—it came from the metal when he rubbed the spoon and fork against each other. He now discovered that he was still holding his utensils and at the same time he thought he heard the proper spoon music, a better one than he was able to produce. It was the music round the table at home where the spoons and forks of the hungry family rang against the plates. He realised that he was hungry, his stomach contracted, but he did not feel, as he had felt up to the present, that he belonged as a matter of course to the circle round the big table.

'Lucie shall have my spoon and my fork,' he thought simply, and turned and went back. The wind now propelled him from the back and blew his hair forward over his forehead. He came to the lee wall in the centre of the village, but the men had all gone home to their dinners. Efflam stood there hunched up with his back to the dry-stone wall, staring through his hair, which hung down over his eyes. For the first time he looked like the men of the village themselves, but in spite of this he seemed more solitary than ever.

Then he saw Marie-Jeanne come hopping along like a gay little wavelet which had lost its way on dry land. Her mitre swayed here and swayed there in quick thrusts like a sea-gull over the waves. Her neckerchief and apron shone blue like the water on a sunny day and fluttered in the breeze. He stretched himself, and tightened his grip on the thin metal handles which he held half hidden on either side of him.

Marie-Jeanne stopped tactfully a few steps away from Efflam. Then she smiled because he smiled—broadly and almost shyly. She saw with surprise how fresh and even his teeth were, it was as if she noticed both them and his mouth for the first time. That must be because his eyes were half-hidden by his hair. She grew

more and more confused, for she did not know what to say. At last she found herself and said simply:

"Good-morning, Efflam!"

"Good-morning, Marie-Jeanne!"

"Why are you standing here alone by the wall? Haven't you been home for dinner?"

"I have been waiting for you."

She blushed with pleasure. "Have you, Efflam?"

"Yes, I wanted to see you come gliding along."

"Gliding?"

"Yes, just as you have done. Didn't you know that, Marie-Jeanne?"

She looked round, wondering, looked at her feet, the one so firmly fixed on the ground and the other only reaching it with the tip of his toe. The roses on her cheeks grew redder and hotter.

"Efflam, but—but—is there—is there something that you can see? Something that I know nothing about?"

While he had been speaking, Efflam had lifted his head and thrown back his hair from his forehead. When his face and eyes were free again, the girl could no longer see the boyish shyness in him, but she saw that he was holding something as he stood there.

"But, Efflam, what are you holding?" she burst out, surprised.

He held out the spoon and fork and for a moment looked so surprised himself that it almost seemed as if he had forgotten it. Then he said as simply as had been his thought:

"Lucie shall have my spoon and fork. I am moving from the 'Garrecs'."

"Where are you moving to?"

"My father will find a place for me."

"I see!" She did not know whether the word 'father' meant her Uncle Guillaume or——

She prayed silently as she walked homeward beside him. 'I will ask him in to dinner,' she thought. 'To-day he shall eat his dinner with us.'

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WHILE MARIE-PIERRE WASHED UP, Yves went out and lay down underneath the lorry to see whether there was anything to repair. The Le Lays went to the bakery to fetch the usual Sunday cakes. They were already back when Blanche Kérlaérec entered her parents' house. As soon as the old mother had finished clattering with the coffee-mill, the carpenter's wife began to speak of that which lay so strongly on her mind.

"There are rumours about," she said. "The Flochs at home there in our house had a visit from somebody who has heard a thing or two. Strange things about miracles with a spoon that was blessed. Any who came was given a mouthful and were immediately happy and satisfied."

"Ha, ha, dear Sister-in-law," laughed Marcel. "Marie-Louise and I have just been to the bakery. Yes, a miracle has taken place. It was more miraculous than anything that ever happened with St. Corentin's fish."

"What was that about?" asked Eliane. "Do tell me, Uncle Marcel!"

"Don't you know the story about Corentin's fish? It was such a strange fish that the old man was able to go out to the spring where he kept it and cut off a piece for his dinner each day and then let it go loose again until he next wished for a piece of fish. Gradlon the Great was himself given a piece of this miraculous fish, and it was for that reason that Corentin was made a bishop. Bribes are necessary, child, as 'people are always credulous. Have you heard any more rumours, Blanche?"

"Yes, I have heard several," she answered as she stood at the door and looked in at the inmates, without allowing herself to be affected by the gay irony of the fisherman. "They said that Efflam Kelou was moving from the Garrecs'. I asked you, Maman, on the way from church and you said that you knew nothing. Have you given him notice, Papa, without letting us know anything about it—us for whom he works?"

"Blanche, it is the first time I have heard anything about it myself," said Guillaume evasively.

"Good! Jacques Goeffry also said that he had heard from

Madame Drezen that Efflam was going to live with carpenter Pierre now that Lucie and the child are coming home. They have room for him there and then he would naturally work for Pierre instead of Gérard."

"Blanche, it is the first time I have heard anything of that either," said Guillaume again.

Marcel Le Lay joined in: "If Madame Drezen has frightened you with talk of that sort she must have a definite reason for it. Has she not a couple of rooms for which she wants to find a suitable tenant?"

"That's nothing to do with me," said Blanche, drawing her marten cape more tightly round her neck and lowering her coif as she passed through the door, stretching herself and keeping her neck stiff as soon as she was outside.

"What a hurry she was in," said Rose. "I think I know what she's feeling. She is afraid that Lucie will take the rooms. She and Gérard are not so fond of their family that they want to have a poverty-stricken sister living so close to them. They are also afraid of being disturbed by the children. The walls of the house are so thin that everything can be heard from landing to landing. Madame Drezen does not want to have any more children there either. She wants someone quiet—someone like our careful Prince."

"Efflam has said that he will move," said Guillaume, and there was a sudden silence. Finally Marie-Pierre broke out:

"But, Papa, you said 'No' when Blanche asked."

The old man looked confused. "Well, well, I've heard no rumours. Nothing about carpenter Pierre. Nothing of that sort. And where should he move to? He belongs to us."

The next moment the big Blanche filled the doorway again. She looked both proud and spiteful. "I met Efflam at the corner of the street. He was with Marie-Jeanne going to Aunt Marie's. I did not even have to ask him. He told me himself that he was going to move. You have lied to me, Papa."

"Blanche, you are wrong. Efflam's heart spoke, but he has nowhere to move to. I hope that he will be content to remain here, for he needs us and we need him."

"Yes," said Marie-Suzette over the coffee-pot. "We two old people have accustomed ourselves to Efflam. It would not be easy

for us to sleep in the same room as small children. If Madame Drezen does not want too much for that flat above you, then Lucie and the child——”

She got no further. Her daughter interrupted her self-confidently:

“It is too late. I am arranging for Efflam Kelou to have it. Gérard needs to have his assistant living near.”

Marie-Suzette sighed. “What can we old people say when Danche has arranged it as she wants to have it? It is perhaps as it should be that Lucie and her children should stay here with us, but I shall miss Efflam. He has been so quiet and silent in our room, and he has brought good fortune to the house.”

Marie-Jeanne went to be with her relations to await the arrival of her cousins and to help Efflam to move. He stood there quietly as always while they arranged and ‘packed’ for him. There were very few things to be put into the big vegetable-basket which they had placed on a chair in the kitchen, but Marie-Jeanne packed with all the more care because the things were so few. First of all she folded up the red Sunday suit and the blue scarf she had knitted herself. There were two pairs of extra felt socks which she had seen yesterday hanging on the washing-line and which Marie-Pierre had mended. The girl stifled a sigh as she laid the socks pair against pair and felt the darns. They were coarse and knobbly. She herself would have done them much more evenly, but her mother always became bad tempered if she, Marie-Jeanne, came home with anything belonging to Efflam and began to busy herself with it. He needed someone to look after his clothes as he himself was entirely indifferent to his own personal appearance. She wondered if in future he would give away all his earnings and leave himself dependent on what others gave him. At this moment she stiffened, and her fingers trembled with emotion and indignation, but she still did her best to lay the next garment carefully together. It was the pair of purple pyjamas with a silk cord that he had brought with him when he came from baker Jegou’s house. ‘Amélie chose these,’ thought Marie-Jeanne, grim and bitter of face. ‘Perhaps she even sewed them herself. Oh, Efflam, dearest . . .’

The humpbacked girl became gentler again and went on pack-

ing with small wrinkles of thought puckering her long, straight eyebrows. This deep, royal purple was not an unusual colour here. She herself had had an apron of it at one time. It went very well with Efflam's pale, golden-brown skin and dark hair.

'No,' she thought hastily, 'I never want to see him dressed in this. Never!' She hid the strongly-coloured garment farthest down in the bottom of the basket. She was so absorbed by what she was doing that Bernadette vainly tried to draw her attention to a collection of bottles and tubes.

"Marie-Jeanne, this is Efflam's too. It was in there in the side-cupboard."

Eliane also began with childish meddlesomeness to bring one thing after another from the bedroom. With the big South Sea shell from the mantelpiece in her arms she cried shrilly:

"But this, Grandma, this, Marie-Jeanne! Isn't this also Prince Efflam's?"

"Child," said Marie-Suzette, "if he wishes to have it he is very welcome, but it has been in the house for a very, very long time. My father brought it when he was in the Merchant Navy."

Eliane was back in the bedroom before her grandmother had finished speaking, letting the heavy shell fall on to the bed. "I shall ask Prince Efflam if he would like it," she said. The next moment the whole thing was forgotten as her eyes fell on the crucifix over the bed. Quickly she clambered up and took hold of it and ran with it out into the kitchen.

"What about this, Grandma? Isn't this Prince Efflam's? He ought to have this with him." Eagerly as before and yet carefully and respectfully she made a little bed among the clothes on the top of the basket and laid the little cross in it. The thought-wrinkles round Marie-Jeanne's eyebrows appeared again. She looked seriously at the broken metal crucifix which all these months had been stuck behind the coloured print over Efflam's bed. The old housewife sighed:

"Child, you worry me. I am tired out. What was that you said? Oh, that crucifix there! It has been badly treated, but it may be that Efflam would like it. I have noticed that he has often lain there looking at it. And perhaps Lucie will be bringing something with her that she would like to put over her bed herself. Let Prince Efflam have it, little Eliane."

Voices and steps were heard in the street. Guillaume appeared, dragging his wheelbarrow loaded up with cardboard boxes and drawers. Marcel Le Lay was carrying a basket chest on his shoulder and a drum of olive oil in one hand. Marie-Louise in her Saturday-afternoon clothes was leading Odile by the hand, and the rather larger Birgitte K  rouant by the other. Marie-Pierre stumped along rather heavily, but she also was dressed in her Saturday finery and had the large, black bear-skin cape round her shoulders. Blanche, being the third one in the national dress of the district, was still finer and had a still more expensive fur, and still broader and stiffer bands fluttering from the rosette behind her ear. She was dragging a child's push-chair. In the middle of this throng walked Lucie in simple town clothes. They had kissed and hugged and blended their tears at the bus stop and were now almost in a festive mood. Her tight, short skirt was dusty and tumbled after the long train journey in the third-class and after the crowded Quimper bus. Her satin blouse was more grey than white, her jacket had burst a seam under one of the arms. Her felt hat had been pushed to one side by all the kissing and the hugging, and her stiffly-permed, semi-long hair stuck out like a bush in all directions. She looked like a very ordinary, insignificant duckling amongst a flock of swans. Not even the mourning-veil which fluttered from her new hat, and which she carefully arranged at every tenth step, improved her appearance.

Next moment Lucie was in her mother's arms, in Rose's, in Marie-Jeanne's, giving them first one and then the other cheek to kiss. The seven-year-old Birgitte took the kisses lightly and carelessly, and the next moment was out in the street making friends with the children of the quarter.

But the little one in the push chair? Those who had stayed at home stared in the same way as those who had met Lucie at the bus stop, and no one felt inclined to bend down and give the welcoming kiss. A three-year-old child who could not yet walk, a strange, deformed little creature, reminding one of a sea-cat—a big, horrible head and under that almost nothing. Guillaume swallowed and swallowed.

"This is our Loulou," he said. "This is our Loulou—Lucie wrote and said that he was not quite like other children."

"Yes, but——" began Marie-Suzette, after which her body

expanded in a sigh great enough to lift the ceiling. She was then ready to overcome her antipathy and take the child in the chair up into her arms. But before she had time to do so its own mother took it up, and then they all saw with emotion and distaste that the boy was dressed up in the most expensive clothes. He was in a blue and white sailor-suit with shining buttons and embroidered anchors on the sailor collar. His stick-like legs, which hung flabbily down, ended in a pair of white boots of the softest skin. It gave them the same sort of feeling as seeing an ape dressed ~~up~~ in human clothes. Lucie held the little shapeless body tightly in her arms, defiant and protective, and said with nervous gaiety:

"Yes, this is my Loulou, *my* Loulou. Look, Loulou, here we are. We have arrived at last." She kissed and caressed the child more violently and nervously than ever. The onlookers felt as guilty as they felt unpleasantly affected. Finally Guillaume cleared his throat:

"Lucie, my daughter, here is Monsieur Efflam Kelou, Prince Efflam as we call him."

Lucie looked round precipitately and suspiciously. In the same way as she had lost her national dress down there in the hot Midi, so she had lost her Breton slowness and her outer calm, and she had grown quick in her movements like those who were born under the southern sun.

"Prince—ha! What grand guests you have here! Yes, Rose, we met your Corentin. He was in Toulon for a few days. It was the week before Paul's operation. He told us that you had a stranger living here, a swell he said. But that it was a prince—ha, ha! Shall we hide you away, Loulou?" She placed the child in its low chair and threw as if in a joke the light-blue blanket with the rabbits in the corner over him. Guillaume took Efflam solemnly by the shoulder and said:

"Monsieur Efflam, meet my daughter, Madame Kérouant."

Efflam bowed and, before anyone realised what he was doing, he had bent down and was sitting on his haunches beside the push-chair. Carefully he took the blanket from the little boy's face and tucked it in neatly under the arms of the little one. Then he looked up at the mother:

"Madame Kérouant, may I speak to Loulou and welcome him? That is to say, if he allows me to do so, Madame?"

They all stood there astounded, and Lucie nodded, dumb and confused. In the background stood Marie-Jeanne, keeping watch over Efflam's basket, her eyes shining as they seldom shone. Efflam took the large, awkward head between his hands and kissed first the one and then the other of the crooked, baggy cheeks. Loulou turned his head as if he did not know what was happening and with a satisfied animal grunt made it known that he in his turn wished to kiss a cheek. The light that now lit up his eyes was more human—or so it seemed to those who were looking on. Guillaume, laying his hand on his daughter's shoulder, said to her confidentially in an aside:

"Prince Efflam is in touch with the higher powers, Lucie. If he can help the child, let him do so! Hush, hush!"

From pure reverence and worship, Guillaume walked on tip-toe, and his manner infected Lucie, who knew nothing of Efflam and was unprepared. She met the gaze of the stranger from where he knelt down on the floor and now for the first time noticed his expression. The child was playing roughly with one of his hands: twisting the fingers and lifting them to his mouth and biting them. Patiently and with perfect contentment he let the child go on playing while he looked up to her and said:

"Madame Kérouant, I should be grateful if I might be allowed to come here and see Loulou now and again and take him out."

"Of course, of course," said the mother, still confused. "If the Prince wishes it, we have nothing against it, of course, on the contrary—but you say come and visit—I thought that you lived here. Maman, does not Prince Efflam live here any longer?"

"He is moving to-day," answered the old lady.

"To-day! Why just to-day?" The thin Lucie in her little tight dress turned round in short, violent jerks, and her hair stood out round her head like a burnt-out, lifeless bush. Although her skirt was narrow her waist seemed to have become too small for it, and her blouse continually separated itself from the skirt. Her small, nervous hands tucked in the blouse again and again, but it worked itself out again immediately. "Is it because I have come that Prince Efflam is moving?" she asked anxiously.

No one answered. They carried things about, moved furniture and household goods. Three more places were added at the table. Large, half-broken cardboard boxes tied up with rope, and old,

shabby packing-baskets stood about the room. Children's clothes lay thrown about, and her new, expensive mourning-hat was constantly in danger of being knocked. She had to move it several times. She was travel-stained and weary and becoming more and more depressed—yes, even bitter. Her face, with its liverish spots and early wrinkles, became distorted. She had the same large almond-shaped eyes as her sisters, blue like her mother's. Then she saw Efflam, who went out with Loulou on his arm, and the bitter grimace turned into something like a smile.

Marie-Jeanne took up the basket with Efflam's belongings and went out to him. He stood there quite still with the child in his arms, and the girl took one of the small white boots and tenderly pressed the foot. She wanted this gesture to be playful, but she was worked up and at the same time full of sorrow and pity. She burst into tears.

To see these bustling, anxious people and this little troll, this ugly little troll—who perhaps was like herself—come and take Efflam's place!

Efflam stood looking out along the road as if he had seen neither the girl's face nor her tears. Nevertheless he said softly and seriously:

"Don't cry, Marie-Jeanne! I have not been told to work miracles with illness and deformities. Perhaps my father will make an exception. Through this child his name will be glorified."

Marie-Jeanne was silent, amazed, understanding nothing except that this man with the calm and lovely voice, who could always smooth out the troubles of her soul, had said something that was full of promise. He turned and went towards Lucie, who had come out on the plank, and he gave the child to her. Then he and Marie-Jeanne were walking up the street. She forgot all else in her happiness at walking for this short time at his side. Then she remembered that she would no longer be able to sit at home at their door and catch a glimpse of him as he came and went. It would therefore be more difficult to imagine how things were going for him, for she would perhaps never be able to see the room in which he was going to live. Blanche would no doubt keep a watch on her and tell tales to her mother if she made any attempt to see him. Suddenly he asked:

"Marie-Jeanne, do you think that I can?"

"Can what?"

"Can cure Loulou?"

"But, Efflam——" she looked up astounded in his face. "Do you mean—— Was that what you were talking about?"

"Another spoke through me. He commanded me to give this sign."

"Have you heard a voice?" she asked in a calm, matter-of-fact voice.

He shook his head.

"No, I myself am the voice."

"Are you?" Now she was at a loss again.

"I am the voice, but someone else forms the words. Do you think that I can do this thing?"

"I think that you can do anything you really want to do," said she, encouraging him. But she quickly corrected herself: "All that Our Lord wishes you to do."

He looked thoughtful and did not answer. They had arrived and went up the short, insecure stones which had been piled on top of each other at the entrance to make the steps to the house, without any attempt at fitting them into each other. In the hall under the stairs to the flat above were a large number of sabots, and Marie-Jeanne and Efflam added theirs to the others. Then they knocked at the Kérlaérecs' door.

Blanche was already at home. She had taken the short cut and had therefore got there first. "All is ready up there," she said. "Madame Drezen was in there this afternoon with blankets and pillows, and I have made up the bed with sheets. Shall we have a drink to welcome Efflam? What do you say, Marie-Jeanne?"

"I would rather not drink anything now," answered the girl bashfully. They had already drunk wine with Lucie and her child—and it seemed as if Blanche herself had had several glasses since she got home. The bottle was out on the table, and a few red drops were on her cousin's lips. 'Wine does not suit Efflam except at meals,' thought Marie-Jeanne, and her bashfulness became stubbornness. She said, for a second time, now short and unfriendly:

"No, I will not drink now. I have not eaten, and Efflam does not like our wine."

"No, I remember now that he does not. He ought to have

arranged to be saved in the part of Brittany where they have cider. Or in Bordeaux—that would have been better still, for there they have the wines grand people drink," said Blanche and dried her mouth. She moved about without looking at the two who stood there, both a little lost. Marie-Jeanne's hardness gave way when she sensed the agitation burning in the big, fair woman. She prayed silently for her cousin as well as for her friend, who had asked her such a strange question on their way here. He stood there now with half-closed, heavy eyelids, nodding now and again—like a horse when it stands sleeping. But he was awake. He was awake, she felt that. She knew that. He had his own strange inner life and moved along ways where she could not follow him. "Holy Mother of God, take care of him when I am no longer able to look after him," she prayed. At that moment Blanche said:

"Yes, everything is in order up there in Efflam's room, but go up and have a look at it, Marie-Jeanne, in case there is something that I have forgotten. Here's the key. Take it and show Efflam where everything is, and see if you think there's enough on the bed."

Marie-Jeanne dragged her tired leg after her up the stairs. It was unaccommodating, very unaccommodating. And the long, thick key was heavy in her hand, but heavier than the key was her heart—like a lump of lead. Efflam walked in front of her with the basket.

"Go up and see about this and that, do this and that," Blanche had said and had thrown herself down yawning beside her sewing-machine. She had obviously calmed herself. But Marie-Jeanne took the key and became once more hard and bitter. 'Far from Blanche keeping a jealous and watchful eye over Efflam and me, she asks me to go up to his room,' thought the girl. 'She does not reckon with me. In her eyes, perhaps in everybody's—perhaps also in Efflam's—I'm not a woman to be reckoned with. I'm only—— O St. Teresa, St. Teresa!'

Oh, how her leg dragged! Now Efflam had reached the landing and was waiting for her. He turned towards her as she came panting up after him. Did he know what was in her heart, in hunchbacked, lame, ugly Marie-Jeanne's heart?

He stood there and looked down at her, and then he smiled. Marie-Jeanne's sorrows disappeared like the lightest mist. The hand holding the key flew up towards him, so light had the heavy

piece of iron suddenly become. And her leg—she had legs no longer, only wings, wings.

"Efflam, I'm coming," she cried, her eyes shining, and her cheeks burning. He smiled once more. The next moment, when she stood by his side and with eager, shaking fingers tried to unlock the door, she suddenly thought: 'Blanche does not reckon with him either. In her eyes—perhaps in everyone's—we are both outside those things that are usually reckoned with.'

"She was so wounded in her soul that she did not care how she stepped. She stumbled over the threshold and fell forward into the room and hardly knew what had happened before she found herself in Efflam's arms. Her surprise pushed all else aside. He was blowing on her forehead! Blowing delicately and carefully.

"Why are you doing that, Efflam?"

"So that you may not get a headache. So that there shall not be a bump."

His hot, tickling breath went through her bones and marrow and made her feel so weak that she would have sunk down and fallen altogether like a little bundle at his feet, if he had not through the inscrutability of his gaze pushed her back into her own great, bitter loneliness. She pressed her face against him so that he could not blow any more on her forehead and the roots of her hair.

While he stood defending himself against her high coif he looked round the room. It was square with a very high ceiling. The walls were whitewashed and the ceiling-boards and beams were dark brown. An open fireplace, a chair, and down on the floor itself a simple toilet set. Against one wall stood a fully made-up bed. There was a high, narrow window with a view across the smallholdings away down to the wide sea-meadows and the south bay.

He wondered and asked himself what meaning lay in this—that he was to live in this room with all this paraphernalia, in this house open to the four quarters, resembling a lighthouse. Was it so that he should learn to look outwards and thus find the path he was to follow? His thoughts were far away, his eyes resting on the sea and the horizon. At the same time he said with sympathy:

"Does it still hurt, Marie-Jeanne?"

The girl looked up so as to look into his eyes again, but found

that he was standing with his face turned towards the window. She followed his gaze but could see nothing, except the rickety laundry-tables, the tubs with their dirty grey contents, the refuse spreading untidily. The wind blew across the cabbage and potato plants. While she looked at all this, he said simply:

"Be strong, Marie-Jeanne!" and then he added: "I need your help. I do not know in which way it will happen, but I know that I can cure Loulou."

She drew herself carefully, and a little frightened, away from him. With as steady a voice as possible she said:

"Eflam, I will pray to St. Teresa and to Our Lady for you."

Then he looked into her eyes and corrected her definitely:

"No, for Loulou, Marie-Jeanne. Do not pray for me, but for Loulou!"

She moved one more step away from him, drawing a deep breath. Yes, it was the child who was there between them, the little sea-cat, the little deformed one with the big head. Now she knew. Nothing that was strong and healthy, nothing that was young and lovely, could stand between the man she loved and herself; it was the deformity and the ugliness, the sorrow and misery of the world.

Oh, yes, that was it! It was this which weighed down his mind, sorrowful unto death. It was this that burnt so strongly in his veiled, sometimes almost lifeless, eyes. Suffering, the suffering of others, had parted them, would always keep them apart. They could not meet except in mutual prayer. Then she would pray for Loulou. Yes, she would pray urgently, wildly, night and day. There was a glow deep within her, but outwardly she was melancholy and calm. She said:

"Shall we unpack your basket, Eflam, and see what other things you need in your two rooms? Just imagine—two rooms!" She was obliged to smile. "Two rooms to yourself, Eflam! Now you are really living like a prince. And there is a bed in each room. When the storms are raging from the south, you can move into your north room. Are you not glad that you are here?"

Marie-Jeanne hopped round and looked about her. The room facing the road, with the view northward to Saint-Fiacre was just like the other one in size and appearance. The only difference was that the bed was low and flat without any bedding. When Marie-

Jeanne received no answer, she turned and found Efflam standing with the crucifix, which Eliane had laid at the top of the basket, in his hand. He looked at it and at the wall. This time the girl could follow him in his reactions. She pointed :

"Look, there is a little nail, there over the bed. I will put a piece of string in it and you can hang it up. One moment, Efflam."

She had already fished up the ball of thread from her skirt pocket. She took an end of the thread, doubled it, pushed it through the hole at the top of the crucifix. A little shyly, she handed it back to Efflam, and he climbed up on to the edge of the bed and hooked the thread to the nail. As soon as he was back on to the floor, they both silently made the sign of the cross, she shyly and hastily, he solemnly and with large gestures.

He remained standing in front of the crucifix, and Marie-Jeanne moved about more and more at a loss. She herself found it difficult to do as he was doing, but it was still more difficult for her to disturb him. Blanche might, in spite of everything, become suspicious if they stayed up here too long. She had been told to see if he had all he needed on his bed, but now, here, it was impossible for her to busy herself with that matter.

She started, terrified, when Efflam threw himself violently on his knees in front of the crucifix with his arms stretched out. His face had the yellow paleness that she remembered when he first came, and he seemed neither to hear nor to see anything except the little silver cross on the whitewashed wall. His eyes moved from right to left—it was as if the arms of the crucified one had suddenly elongated themselves so that he was obliged to turn his eyes from side to side so as to look from one of the pierced hands to the other.

Marie-Jeanne once again made the sign of the cross shyly and hastily, and went out of the room. She staggered down the stairs and passed the Kérlaérecs' door, stepped mechanically into her sabots and started homeward. Her heart was beating so hard that it hurt her, but she did not know whether she was despairing or exalted. 'Now he is seeking strength to cure Loulou,' she thought. 'Everything in him is concentrated on the deformed little one. I shall, I will, pray for Loulou. I am praying for Loulou. Holy Mother of God, good St. Anne, St. Teresa, pray for Loulou. I am praying, I am praying . . .'

CHAPTER TWELVE

MARIE-JEANNE PRAYED for her little cousin who was so ill. She prayed in defiance and despair, for although she suffered and repented she was not able to drive the jealousy out of her heart. Then she prayed still more persistently, turning to the blessed saints whose prayers are always unselfish. Through them her prayers, purified, would reach the throne of God. "St. Teresa, pray for Loulou, oh, pray for Loulou that he may be healed. Holy Joseph! Be a father to the fatherless. Pray for him. Pray for Loulou."

Efflam was like the drenched earth beneath his windows: softened, without resistance, receptive to anything that heaven or sea might send, violent storm or drizzling rain or mist. He lay in the darkness and listened to the noises in his new home. Here also the wind dragged at the shutters and piped in the chimneys and the cracks. Here also he heard people cough and clear their throats. Most clearly of all he heard the Goeffrys who lived above him. He heard their breathing, their long conversations at night, their padding, shoeless footsteps, their toilet arrangements.

The beams from the lighthouse shone strong and clear straight into his room, which faced the road. From the window in the other room he could follow the recurrent beams as they touched the carpenter's workshop and lighted up the country round as clearly as a flash of lightning. A reflection of these beams penetrated the darkness in the room itself, and in their weak light he could discern the crucifix, its arms lengthening out in the fugitive wings of light that fluttered ghost-like about the room. He threw out his own arms and straightened his legs. They were half benumbed from the weight of the thick, damp-absorbing duvet he had been given. Were his legs becoming thin, powerless sticks? Were they becoming like Loulou's legs? And his head? Tired and heavy, it fell to one side. It swelled, it grew large and strange. Cold sweat was pressed out of his body, where he lay buried in the heavy, damp, strange-smelling bed-clothes. It was the smell of a new family—the Drezens.

His legs were powerless, dead. His head swelled and felt blown out.

'Now it is happening,' he said to himself; shivering from expectation and fear, and wildly triumphant, he clasped his hands and ground his teeth under his drawn-up lips. 'It's happening, I am taking it upon myself, I am saving,' he thought. Exhausted by the tension in his soul, he fell into a deep sleep and woke in the grey dawn. His temples were pounding, and he had a splitting headache. Again he drew up his lips like an animal and ground his teeth—then he hid himself hastily and entirely under the bed-clothes. The same disagreeable morning noises came from the Goeffry's above him as he knew so well from the Garrecs. The fisherman's wife was sweeping her kitchen, and the broom scratched and clawed at the boards. She went on a long time just over his bed and a very fine dust seeped through the chinks of the floor on to his duvet. When this was over, another sound reached Efflam's ears; the coffee-mill from the Kérlaéracs below him. He tossed the bed-clothes aside and got up.

Efflam looked at the view while he dressed. It was wet, and the green trees dripped, their leaves hanging down. The sea itself could not be seen, only a greyish-yellow mist where the shore-meadows ended. But the wind was already beginning to tear the fog into ribbons.

He saw one of the foreigners from his landing, a tall, bent narrow-shouldered man, with his fair, greying hair and pale, hanging cheeks. He had been fetching water and splashed it as he walked, finally disappearing into the house. Efflam met him immediately afterwards on the stairs. A pair of light-blue, screwed-up, almost near-sighted eyes stared in an inquisitive but friendly manner at the big-nosed carpenter's apprentice.

"Good-morning, Monsieur. It's blowing to-day, and raining too," he said in broken French.

"Yes, Monsieur. It is blowing again," agreed Efflam seriously, and they each went their way.

Blanche put out the coffee-bowls for Efflam and her husband, and, taking up the saucepan, filled them with the steaming hot milk. She herself remained where she was, picking her teeth and looking out of the window while she talked to the two at the table.

"Yvonne Stéphan is first with her washing again," she said. "She hasn't even got chairs in her house, so that she and the children can't sit down to eat—they stand round the table, I've

seen them. And the number of dresses she gets for Marie-Chantal—four, five, six—why, I can't even count them. And then that confirmation suit she got hold of for Jean. He is to be photographed too. She has boasted about that. She's going to crochet more gloves so as to make a little money. Now she's complaining that her pension and children's allowances are too small. But the way she embroiders and sews for these children!"

"Blanche—er—er—listen, Blanche—why don't you let others live their lives as they please? After all, she likes to see her children well dressed. You are anxious that Lucienne should be dressed as well as we——"

"How can you compare us with them?" his wife interrupted him. "I ought to be able to afford clothes for Lucienne, I who am a tax-payer."

"Has Madame Stéphan no chairs at all in her house?" asked Efflam.

"You had better ask her, Monsieur," retorted Blanche shortly. "Off you go to your work, both of you," she went on, "and see that you get something done."

The carpenter was not quite ready, and the door to the workshop was still locked. Efflam waited outside and looked sympathetically at the little shy, work-worn widow at the laundry-table. 'She has no chairs,' he thought, 'not even a chair to sit down on when she is hungry and tired.'

Then the carpenter came, and he and Efflam were soon at work.

During the morning, when the machines were silent and the two men had paused to have a little rest, the assistant broke the silence in the workshop:

"Monsieur Kér-la-érec, would you allow me to use your workshop and your machines in the evenings and on Saturday afternoons? And might I buy a little wood from you?"

"Why, I have nothing against that; but I should like to ask—although I don't want to intrude—what you are going to make, Kelou?"

"Chairs."

"Chairs! Chairs? Oh, I see, chairs. Yes, yes, why not . . . Yes, Kelou. I don't think there is anything against that. Blanche cannot very well——"

"Thank you, Monsieur."

At dinner Blanche continued to talk:

"We were paid for our first batch of thread gloves to-day," she began. "Poor Lucie hasn't much skill left in her fingers. She has begun to crochet, but she'll not be able to do more than three pairs of gloves a week. Marie-Jeanne does a pair and a half a day. No, Lucie has become useless and lazy down in the South. I've heard that the women down there don't even trouble to patch their own or their husbands' clothes, but walk about in rags."

"Well, you up here patch enough both for them and for us. You patch the knees whether they're ragged or torn," said Gérard good-naturedly. "I suppose you have noticed, Kelou, that we never content ourselves with one patch on one knee or on one elbow. If one of them is torn the other has to have its patch also."

"How odd your clothes would look if the patches did not match!" said his wife.

"The Kervily ladies are very good at mending clothes," said Efflam, but Blanche did not notice his polite remark. She was sipping her glass of wine and looking suspiciously at her husband. The latter blinked nervously.

"You have mixed water in this wine," she said.

"No, Blanche, no—you're imagining it," he cried. She looked more and more upset.

"There is water in it. Water mixed straight into the bottle! If it's not you, it's Madame Drezen. She shan't get away with this. Why, I can go straight home to Maman and get wine there at cost price. I only buy it from the Drezens at the highest retail price so as to keep her sweet. But now she shall have a piece of my mind."

"No, Blanche, Blanche, dearest wife!" the carpenter burst out in terror. "It's I, it's I. You mustn't say anything to Madame Drezen. It's my fault. I thought, I imagined—that it would be better for you."

His wife got up, stood for a moment with the half-empty bottle of wine in her hand, looked at it, looked at her husband. Suddenly her anger blazed up, and she took the bottle and turned it upside down over his head. But before the last drop of dark red liquid had run down over his hair and cheeks, she had let her arms fall to her sides apathetically, had put the bottle in the corner of the room and sat down weeping.

"Maman shall hear of this," she sobbed. "You grudge me a

glass of wine. I who work and earn more than most. Am I not right, Efflam?"

"Your husband loves you, but he doesn't know how best to help you," answered Efflam.

"I don't need any help. I only want to be treated like a grown-up person and drink wine at meal-times like everybody else," said the wife. "Get along to your work, both of you! But before you go, Efflam, please fetch me a few pails of water. And mind you don't spill it on the steps like that tall foreigner does. He slopped it all over my newly-washed steps this morning, and then the other one came, that clumsy, fat fellow, and tramped upstairs with his muddy boots straight from the fields. They wear the same shoes indoors and out."

"What was he doing in the field, that Monsieur Ludwig?" asked Gérard, who was peacefully washing the dishes while Efflam fetched the water and the goods from the shop.

"He was in the middle of the onion-field out there with his sketching things, painting the Hélias's house. I have no doubt that the girls came into the picture too. They were standing in the porch with their crochet. Those foreigners like to paint us in our national dress."

Blanche had got over her bad temper and was preening herself coquettishly and arranging her head-dress. "I'll take my work with me and go out for a bit," she said. "I'll go over to the Hélias's."

When they were back in the workshop, Gérard Kérlaérec, after some hesitation and shyness, turned to his apprentice, clearing his throat:

"Efflam Kelou, you said a short while ago that I loved my wife, but I did not understand how to help her. That is true enough. But what can I do to help her?"

"Madame Kérlaérec is bored and full of longing," answered Efflam, without lifting his eyes from his work.

"Yes, but——" Gérard looked at his assistant with surprise. "Yes, but," he began again, "she is much better off, much more secure than the fishermen's wives. She has no anxiety when there is a storm, she never has to lie longing for her husband. And—well—well, I do not think she is altogether dissatisfied with me."

"That's true, Kérlaérec, she's much better off and more secure

than most. It's just for that reason that she's vaguely dissatisfied and longs for something she does not know what, just for something beyond her horizon."

The other man passed his hand through his red, curly hair. He was surprised and thoughtful.

"For something she does not know what—something beyond her horizon. Something vague— You're right, Prince. I think you're right. But what can I do? I cannot very easily turn myself into a fisherman or a sailor."

"Give her something to occupy her."

"What do you suggest, Prince?"

"Let her take care of Loulou."

Kérlaérec did not answer. The machine whined, hissed and spat out pieces of wood and sawdust. The dust laid itself on his eyebrows and his sweaty top lip, and the vibration of the saw transmitted itself to his body in quite a different way now that his mind was upset and trembling at the thought of Efflam's suggestion. Never would he dare to suggest to his wife that she should take charge of the little idiot boy. The little, helpless, ugly creature. If it had been a pretty little girl, whom she could dress up and pet, it would have been a very different matter.

After a long time had passed, he stopped the circular saw and turned his dust-covered face towards his assistant.

"Efflam, will you suggest to my wife that she takes charge of Loulou for a time?"

"Yes, Kérlaérec."

They were called to their meal and silently ate the bread and *pâté* put before them. Gérard nunched nervously, and in the silence the click of his jaws sounded like little cracks. He was conscious of it and grew more and more nervous, but what could he do about it? The joints of his thin jaws had the peculiarity that they creaked when he ate the tough bread of the district. His wife looked listless and sleepy. He wondered whether she had got out more wine as a revenge on him. Or perhaps she had been offered it over at Hélias's?

She rose, and went silently to her chair at the window, pulled the little embroidered footstool towards her and supported her feet on it. Her husband lit a cigarette and leant back in the sofa. He grew calmer. After all, he had left everything to his assistant.

"Blanche Kérlaérec, Madame Kérlaérec, before the sun goes down between La Joie and Saint-Fiacre, you will have done great things."

Blanche's long blue eyes and half-open mouth expressed a big question. The man on the sofa slumped, a little frightened, but curious as to how his wife would take it. She looked Efflam up and down with an expression of faint scorn in the corners of her mouth. She shaded her eyes and blinked her eyelids, casting aside her crochet-hook and thread, and said banteringly:

"Really! Will I be taking the veil and entering a convent? Or what do you suggest that an old woman like me out here at the end of the world should do that is wonderful?"

"You will have taken charge of an unhappy child and given a tired mother a little rest."

"What do you mean?"

"God expects you to fetch Loulou and look after him."

The last remark was said simply and with decision, while Efflam fixed his deep gaze upon her. Then he turned round and went out of the room. The carpenter sidled towards the door, looking round at his wife in a guilty way. She was so heavy and slow that she had only time to turn half round in her chair before she was alone. With puckered eyebrows she remained quite still, brooding on Efflam's words. Pride and disdain fought with the desire to show the two men that they could not make such mad suggestions to her and remain unpunished. That Gérard had been party to the whole thing she gathered from his hang-dog looks.

She would certainly have done something great, to be sure!

As if it were not a big enough thing to look after those two men in the workshop and make their coffee with milk, and beat the omelette, and keep them mended up and clean. After all, she herself earned more than half of what was needed to keep the girl at school in Quimper.

Something great—ha! To look after an idiot boy. Was that a great thing? Then it was not difficult to find great deeds in the world. Useless, stupid, she herself would call it.

God expects you . . .

God—

Was there a God? She looked past the rubbish round the house and noticed how the wind shook the potato green and the thick

maize grass. There was still the coldness of spring in the air. The sun shone, but the light was disagreeable, and the stiff grass over there flashed and shone like hard sheet-metal. The potatoes were still singed and brown in spite of the fact that they had begun to flower a little. The sea was a showy violet-blue, and the line of the horizon was sharp.

The happenings of the last few moments were entirely blotted out from the young woman's memory. The fair, blooming face seemed turned to stone, but her gaze was drawn towards the cold, sharp horizon.

Suddenly she started and looked round the room as if in terror. God expects . . .

She got up and tied her shawl round her, found her sabots and clattered down the shaky stone steps, and from habit cursed the miserly landlord who would not give them a proper flight of steps. Excited and worked up, she stood at the workshop door, looking in. She was angry and defiant and, swayed by her own strange logic, wished to revenge herself on the two carpenters. Her husband took a few steps towards the door, still holding the end of a long board. He strained his ears to catch his wife's words above the sound of the plane on Efflam's bench. She shrieked:

"I'm going to fetch Loulou—if Lucie will let me have the child—and then you two will only have yourselves to blame."

The next moment only her back could be seen as she went towards the village.

Marie-Jeanne knew that Loulou was with the Kérlaérecs at Efflam's request. 'Oh, my friend how incomprehensible you are, how difficult to understand,' she sighed—and began to pray again hotly and eagerly.

"Holy Joseph, foster-father and guardian, carry Loulou in your fatherly arms. Bear him into the presence of your royal foster-son in heaven. Bear him to the One who had pity on so many unhappy ones, cured so many deformed ones . . . Oh, Efflam, what is it that you really want?"

She ended so agitated that she laid aside her work and hurried out. Her mother stopped her at the door.

"Where are you going?"

"To the Kérlaérecs. I must see how Loulou is getting on. I

have knitted a doll for him. Look, Maman, it is soft and quite safe. It cannot harm him in any way."

"Yes, yes, my girl, take little Loulou his doll—but it is not because of that poor little creature that you are so anxious and want to go to the Drezens' house."

Marie-Jeanne met one and another in the little streets, and one after another they made remarks that either increased her anxiety and tormented her—or made her heart beat in happy surprise. The gossip was all about her friend's doings and utterances.

She passed the square close to the Drezens', which was full of people who were either getting off or getting on to the Quimper bus. But she had not gone very far before the bus hooted frenziedly behind her so that she was obliged to step to one side. Hardly had she pulled herself together and started on again before she jumped a second time.

"What's the hurry, Marie-Jeanne? Are you on your way to see how your sweetheart is getting on?" cried a voice behind her.

It was Marcel Le Lay, and the girl blushed hotly at his cheery shout. He caught her up, laughing, now rather ashamed of his teasing.

"I thought I would see how Loulou was getting on, and give him this doll," explained Marie-Jeanne, her cheeks still burning.

Then with more boldness and with more self-assurance she added:

"And I also want to see Efflam."

Le Lay appreciated her new, courageous tone of voice.

"That's right, Marie-Jeanne, you must not forget your protégé," he said. "If he had not such a sensible girl as you to look after him, all that ridiculous prince talk would have gone to his head before now. Another thing: it's all very well for Blanche to look after that poor child—where would my Marie-Louise be without Odile?—it's a good thing for Blanche, I say, to have that little extra trouble, and Gérard thinks so too—but you should see to it that your prince does not concern himself too much with the little idiot boy. It's not pleasant watching a big weakling trying to help a little one. Nor to hear the gossip that is going round about it all. After all, it's about our own family. Wherever one goes they throw it in one's face: 'Has that miracle-maker healed the child yet? Has the boy learnt to walk yet?' "

Marie-Jeanne blushed for the second time, but now from annoyance. Then she threw back her head, and looking at him frankly, she said:

"Tell them that Loulou is much better already, and that before *Pardon*-time at Kerscaven he may even be able to walk."

"That scoundrel! Is that what he's about now!"

The exclamation did not come from Le Lay but from Jehan Lescantin, who had been to the harbour office and now met the two on the road. Le Lay laughed:

"There you are, Jehan. There's something new for you to spread abroad. Hurry up, man, it may help the miraculous cure if people begin to believe in it. How's the seaweed going? Wouldn't you like to come out on the *Cormorant* again? The ship and the equipment are all ready now, and we are going to begin the seine-fishing almost at once. You'll find it more paying than the mackerel fishing. Why not join us again?"

"It's too late," shouted Lescantin, already on his way towards the village. "I can't go out on that sort of fishing any longer, I am to fish for men. I'll begin with Madame Drezen here at the bus office. It's a good distributing point— Have you any idea, Madame, what is going on in your house over there? You think that you have ordinary, respectable Bretons living there—with the exception of a couple of semi-respectable tourists. You think they are simple, ordinary people, all of them. But no, not so— Yes, listen to me, good people. The bus has only just gone, you have plenty of time before the next one. Listen! The miracle-worker, the holy man over there in the Drezens' house, has given us new and great evidence of his supernatural powers. He has said to the child 'Walk!' and he walked. He is now well formed and sensible, he has stood on his feet and become a normal child. Let us praise and glorify God for all the miracles in our village. Let us honour him who has come to us."

"How well you speak, Lescantin!" someone cried. "Go on!"

"But is it really true that the child is cured?" said another, and a third added:

"Silence—let us hear what Lescantin has to say, for he knows all about it. Let us hear all that has happened!"

Le Lay rushed off, leaping across the grass edges of the road, until he reached the nearest path leading to the old village. Marie-

Jeanne hid herself by the corner of the house to which she was going. She had to stand there for a few moments with her hand on her thumping heart. Her eyes were dry and hot.

"God in heaven, what is happening?" she asked herself. "Is it my fault that these rumours have got about? Am I doing foolish, sinful things?"

She held her breath for a moment and listened and found that they were still talking and shouting over there at the bus station. "O dear Lord"—she pressed her hands against her breast so that it should not burst into pieces with the great thoughts that suddenly filled her heart—"Lord, is it true that he has been able? I must know! I must see!"

As she hastened towards her goal, she again jumped with fright as another bus came rattling past her. As it passed, she saw many faces pressed against the panes, and somebody pointed towards the lonely house standing by the road. Alternating between belief and doubt, she went on.

The door to the carpenter's shop was pushed to one side, and a fire was burning brightly inside, but there was no sound of machines or tools. On the other hand, there was a strong smell of newly-roasted coffee. She made her way to the fire at the farther end, round which hung glue-pots and saucepans, but it was Marie-Suzette's old, big coffee-roaster that was taking up all the room on the embers. Blanche was turning it energetically. She looked half suffocated by heat and the strong coffee fumes, but she nodded in a friendly way to her visitor.

"What a lot of coffee you are roasting," said Marie-Jeanne, looking at the hot, dark beans as they lay cooling on newspapers spread about the floor. Blanche snorted as she opened the glowing metal cylinder and examined the contents. Then she started the roaster again.

"Yes," she shouted above the noise. "I've borrowed Maman's roasting machine, so I'm doing as much as I can while I've got it. How are you, Marie-Jeanne?"

"Quite well, thank you. Where is——?" She looked searchingly round the empty workshop.

"Gérard is at the new house in Trémeur, you know. He is taking measurements for windows and doors."

"And——?"

"Efflam is on the beach, I think. I asked him to take Loulou out for a walk. I wanted a bit of peace and quiet as I have so much roasting to do."

"Do you know to which of the beaches he's gone? You see, I have knitted a doll for Loulou, and I want to give it to him myself."

"He went down across the fields, along the path towards St. Anne's shore—— That's the name he has given to the piece of beach down by the south bay."

"I know."

She left Blanche coughing over the strong smoke of the coffee machine and went out into clearer air. Madame Le Floch was working as energetically outside the workshop as Blanche inside. She was brushing her husband's coat and trousers. Now, however, she stopped for a moment and looked at Marie-Jeanne.

"He went down toward the shore."

"I know. What a lovely day it is. The washing won't take long to dry!

The girl took the path among the kohlrabi plants towards the dry-stone wall that divided the plantations from the meadows below. As she was about to climb over the wall, she met the two foreigners who lived opposite Efflam. She blushed shyly, for they remained on the other side of the stile, waiting for her to come over first, and one of them held out his hand to support her. She became miserably conscious of her defects as, hopping and gesticulating, she had to pass them. They, like Madame Le Floch, knew only too well whom she was seeking.

"Prince Efflam is down there on the beach," said the man with the black beard, smiling mischievously. His friend also, who could scarcely speak a word of understandable French, dared to practise one or two sentences in front of the hunch-backed girl.

"Yes, Mademoiselle, we met your prince. He was carrying the sick child on his arm," he explained.

"Thank you, Messieurs, thank you, Messieurs," said Marie-Jeanne, blushing more than ever and only too glad to get past them and hurry on. The grass and the sedge soon came to an end, and the sea-poppy stood in clumps 'tike' small bushes in the sand. With its ice-green, brittle leaves it was as coldly fresh as the sea. The pale yellow of the flowers was as clean as every-

thing else out here and as fleeting as a tuft of scum on the surface of the water, for after they had bloomed one day they were blown out like a candle that has burned itself away.

Marie-Jeanne broke off one or two buds. If St. Teresa was to have joy from these fugitive blossoms, she must take them home as buds. Holding her simple bunch, she stepped up on to the ridge of the dunes, from which point she could see the stretch of beach. Where is he, my friend? What is he doing? O good St. Anne, if he has turned to you enfold him in your intercessions!

No one, not even the seaweed workers, were down there now. They had moved on to the upper part of the beach and sat there eating their meal. Whichever way she looked, the belt of sand was covered with seaweed. It lay there solitary and gloomily brown, this steaming, salt-sweet ocean hay, newly harvested and now drying in the sun.

There was no Efflam to be seen. Marie-Jeanne stood there patiently looking around. The wind sighed through the lace of her head-dress. It rustled and rattled in the stiff rosette, it caressed her wide, dark sleeves and soft folds of her skirt and pressed the pliable material against her limbs. The strong, clear May light shone on her exposed, brown face.

An old leaky boat lay half-buried in the sand. Marie-Jeanne had begun to move away when she discovered that something was moving on the other side of the boat, something quite small, it might be a dog sniffing round it here and there—if only the broad, round head had not so clearly shown it to be a human being. She held her breath. Surely it could not be——?

Yes, it was Loulou. But when she came nearer he was not moving as when she had noticed him at first. He was lying on his face in the sand. Efflam was lying there too, just behind the boat. They lay on a spot that was free from seaweed, and the sand sparkled all the more, reflecting the rays of the sun. The grey sandfleas and other small insects which inhabited it made it appear alive and sparkling. These tiny, living 'grains of sand' sparkled round Efflam's bare feet and legs. His sabots and socks lay a little way off, and he had rolled up his trousers to his knees. The child's little boots stood beside Efflam's broad sabots. They too seemed to be enjoying the air and the freedom. Marie-Jeanne

laid her hands on the sun-heated wood of the boat and spoke in Breton:

"I've found you at last, Eflam!"

It seemed as if he had not heard her. He began to move towards Loulou, still lying on the sand. Then he sat up, took hold of the child under his armpits and stood the boy up on the sand. Then he drew back again and crouched down—looking like an animal ready to spring. Suddenly he raised his voice in such a way that the girl at the other side of the boat started nervously, while over there by the stacked seaweed faces appeared. They withdrew again immediately, as if it were not the first time their owners had heard those strange cries.

"St Anne," cried Eflam. "Thank you for letting the miracle happen. Look, he's walking!"

The boy was shifting his legs. He had moved. Loulou had walked. He took one or two tottering little steps before he fell on his nose at Eflam's feet in the loose, warm sand.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

LOULOU HAD BEGUN TO WALK. From neighbouring farms and villages—even from far-away parishes people made pilgrimages to the solitary house at the entrance to Kervily to see the miracle. The child caused disappointment in most cases and often annoyance, as if the visitors had been lured there by something which had been promised them. Could it be called walking, this uncertain tottering on his small, short legs? And how about the intelligence in those eyes that shone and rolled in the big childish head? Then the grunting words were only sometimes distinguishable—could it really be called talking? Upon my word, the child must have been pretty bad if this could be called an improvement and a miracle.

In spite of all this, the visitors, although they felt cheated and annoyed, retained an inquisitive interest in Eflam himself. They stood about outside the workshop, gazing at the carpenter's assistant inside. Wonder and uncertainty possessed them anew when they saw the long, pale hands lifted and closed round some

piece of light yellow wood. Sometimes they were lighted up by a ray of sunshine from the cobweb-covered window, and then the faint blue of the veins stood out and the down on them gleamed. Sometimes he lifted his face and fixed his eyes on the curious people in the doorway. His eyes, they saw, were strange, unfathomable. Then at last they left with a trembling feeling of having been near something inexplicable.

Dr. Guilcher stopped his car one day, came in and asked to see the child. The object of his visit was to establish that a miracle had really taken place, or rather perhaps to establish the opposite.

The doctor carefully felt the little boy; examined the child's eyes, looked at his tongue, jerked his knees, spoke to him. Then he talked to the carpenter and his wife, who were both present during the examination. The husband, Gérard, nervous, his knees shaking, clearing his throat now and again, his wife, Blanche, yawning and bored. Dr. Guilcher thought that he could probably depend on what these two people told him, for the one would tell the truth because of his tender conscience, the other was too apathetic and indifferent to tell a lie. He thus learnt that the boy Loulou was at long last beginning to walk and even to speak, and that during the last fortnight he had made quite definite progress.

But how was it before? Had the child ever been able to stand on his feet? Had he shown the slightest glimmer of intelligence? Gérard Kérlaérec shook his head still more nervously and his knees shook still more. He really did not wish to answer all these questions, he had not the necessary information. His wife stifled a yawn again and said, half-turning away with her hand before her mouth:

"It would be better if you asked my sister, Doctor. I never took much notice of Loulou before he came here and Prince Efflam began to take him in hand. I have, as a matter of fact, asked Lucie to come and fetch the boy home, there's been so much talk and fuss here since he was cured. So many people come to look at him."

"Cured," repeated Dr. Guilcher, and fixed his eyes on Blanche. "So, Madame, you still maintain that something definite has happened since you took charge of the child?"

"Yes, certainly, he has become quite different. Is not that so, Gérard?"

"Oh yes, yes, of course. He has changed a great deal. One can hardly recognise him for the same child."

"Well, well, is that really so?" said the doctor. After that he no longer seemed to find the husband and wife so reliable. "And what does the young—hm—Prince Efflam say?"

"He says that it is the Great Mother who has taught Loulou to walk."

"What does he mean?"

"He calls St. Anne the Great Mother."

"Oh, is that so?" The doctor shook his head thoughtfully, stroked his beard and departed.

Later, when Lucie Kérouant had fetched Loulou, Dr. Guilcher looked in on the Garrecs in order to see the child again and question his mother. Lucie hid the little one as she had always done and was unwilling for the doctor to examine him.

"But, my dear Madame," said the doctor, "this is a case of general interest. It is very important to know whether the doctors really considered your child incurable."

"Doctors very seldom have hearts in their breasts," answered the widow. "The only person who has taken any interest whatever in Loulou is the foreign prince."

Dr. Guilcher laughed, with a forced friendliness. "Yes, dear Madame, I am afraid that you are quite right. But now—will you not——?"

"I need no doctor for my child."

"I only wish to speak to you yourself about the matter."

"I have nothing to say, Doctor."

"But, my good woman, try to forget for a moment that I'm a doctor. It's not as if I were a godless unbeliever! On the contrary, I try to be as good a Christian as I can, and I truly believe that Our Blessed Lord can still perform miracles. It is just for that very reason that, to my mind, uncontrolled miracles are as unhealthy and dangerous as vague, undisciplined and unorthodox religion. The priest, naturally, is also interested in this matter, and in the rumours that are going round, although he has not taken any part in the matter. It might perhaps be better for me as well as for the authorities in general if the priests were less discreet and did not always pretend that they knew nothing about these things. However, I should be the first to admit that the

attitude of the Church in refusing to mix itself up in this sort of thing is excellent and sound."

"I don't understand anything about all that sort of thing," was Lucie's only comment, and the doctor stood up with a sigh. Breton stubbornness had taken a firm hold of the little widow. When this happened nothing could be done. Nor was there anything to be expected from the other inmates, from the little girls playing on the floor to Marie-Suzette at the stove, or even Guillaume himself at the table. They had all equipped themselves with the impregnable armour of silence from the very start. Not until the doctor had got up to go and was walking towards the door did they utter a word. Then they said good-bye politely and made their remarks about the weather.

Efflam saw the people stop, look at him, and then move away. He saw the stern fishermen's wives, who had up till now walked past him stiffly and proudly, turn aside to let him pass. The men who were merry with the usual Saturday night's merriment grew silent as he approached. Gérard and Blanche Kérlaéc became more and more unsure of themselves and took special care of him. There was something new, something strange, in the air itself between him and other people.

When he was out alone he was, as always, caught up in the powers of nature. Then reality became so overpowering and so inexplicably frightening that the supernatural, the unseen, seemed to be the thing more near, the thing most real.

During the night he lay in his solitary room, keeping vigil and trying to solve the riddles which still surrounded him. From the darkness encompassing his own person rose a huge form, vaguely outlined—ghost-like, but tremendous. *Who am I? Who am I?* The answer slowly took shape lying in the air above him, but he hesitated and did not quite dare to grasp it.

A strong southerly storm was brewing. For several days the broad bay resembled a steel-blue landscape of mountains and valleys, with 'snow' on the furthestmost peaks. Then came the rain, and for three nights and days both the sea and the land were invisible. The rain beat and hissed on the window-panes and the water streamed in under the boarding and the window frames. Beneath all this the storm continued. Those who had not already

had time to shut themselves up worked with all their strength to get the grey wooden shutters closed in front of the windows. Then the rooms lay in still deeper gloom, and the houses were more than ever reminiscent of a ship creaking its way through the high seas. Blanche moved Efflam's pillows and blankets to the room facing north, and he lay there feeling the house rock while the wind and the rain thundered and seethed all around it. The muffled roar of the fog-signals was heard like a sinister undertone.

At last it cleared. The sirens fell silent and instead the beams from the lighthouse were thrown over land and sea throughout the night. Efflam was kept taut by the sharp light coming at such regular intervals. He lay with his window wide open, for he felt drawn towards the strong, direct visits from out there. His eyes were wide open, absorbing and seeing the night with its mysteries.

Scarcely had he fallen asleep before he was woken by footsteps on the floor above, by Jacques Goefry's cough, by the noisy yawns of his son, Nonna, and by the tinkling of water in the pail. Almost immediately afterwards the two Goefry men would run almost soundlessly in their felt soles past his door and down the stairs. Once outside they would begin to talk loudly and, their sabots clattering, would pass just beneath his window.

Once again he dozed off until new noises penetrated the ceiling and the walls. Brushes scratched the floor-boards. The metallic rattle of stove-rings and oven doors and the even buzz of the coffee-grinder filled the house. The twittering voices of children. Then he would get up and dress, although he had not had his sleep out.

During the morning slop-pails were emptied through the windows, the damp bedclothes were lifted and placed on the sills of the open windows for a thorough airing, planes, drills and chisels worked in the carpenter's shop, while brushes and soap were busy outside where the washing-tubs stood. Clothes began to flutter on the line. The women had been kept to their crochet for too many days without a break. Fingers had therefore become stiff by grasping the crochet-hook, arms and backs bent in the same position demanded a stretch and longed to exercise themselves in heavier and coarser work.

Blanche hunted round voraciously for anything that needed

washing. She caught hold of her husband by his coat-collar and looked critically at his shirt.

"Take it off, I want to wash it."

"It was clean yesterday."

"Take it off."

She snatched the napkins from the dining-table and the towels from the wall, hanging them over her arm, while she looked at Efflam, although she did not act so high-handedly towards him as towards her husband.

"I should like to wash your shirt and underclothes, Efflam. Everything must be clean in this house."

Efflam went obediently upstairs, changed and came down with his clothes in a little bundle which he handed over to her with a bow.

"Here they are, Madame."

"Thank you, now I will hurry up and get it all laid out on the grass before the next shower comes. Adelaide Le Floch has already laid out hers. Rain and sun alternately whiten the clothes, and the wind is fresh and dry to-day."

The weather was already good enough for people from a distance to arrive. They got off the bus at the Drezens' and came in small groups back to the house they had passed a few moments ago. Blanche at her wash-tub received them.

"The child is no longer here, but——" She left her scrubbing-brush and soap on the wet clothes, and straightened herself up and became business-like. "Would you like to see a photograph of the child? I have just received some that were taken only a day or two ago. Twenty francs apiece. I have also souvenirs, scarves and ash-trays and vases on which 'Kervily' is written."

She asked them to step in and opened her little shop with its collection of objects she had lately bought in Quimper. Also the picture-postcards and photographs she had obtained through the photographer in Saint-Fiacre.

The photographer had also tried to take a photograph of the wonder worker, but he had not succeeded. Efflam had drawn aside with a definite:

"My kingdom is not of this world."

It was a long time since he had used any Biblical expressions of this sort. He was surprised at what he had said now, and stood

with a thoughtful expression while he went on working. Kérlaérec at his bench selected and rejected. He treated his assistant to a discourse about the various types of wood.

"Fir wood from the Black Forest in Germany has always been a difficult wood to work," he said, and Efflam's imagination was captured by the words Black Forest, although the flow of his own musings was not interrupted. The carpenter was unusually talkative this morning, and went on:

"The Riga fir tree is another matter altogether. I am now speaking of the time when the state of the world was such that one could choose one's wood. It was the best material of all to work with. In old days it was the only kind of wood for doors and window-frames, and also for roof beams."

Efflam's thoughts continued on their own way. 'The black forests,' he thought, 'black hours, black boards—black crosses.'

Black crosses?

'Why did I think of that?' he asked himself. 'It was as if I were thinking of something that I had experienced.'

Black crosses. A group of black crosses. Three black crosses on the top of a hill.

He stopped, terrified, but his thoughts soon crept back to the same subject.

He had a view over most of the parish from the room that faced on to the road. It was now late, and the sun, even in the afternoon, moved over La Joie and approached Saint-Fiacre towards sundown. His eyes and thoughts were drawn in that direction. The two railway lines stretched in the same direction, across the plain towards the little village on the other side of the bay. Every morning the goods train with its little trucks came whistling along. It moved backwards and forwards until the signal was given, and then it got up steam seriously and thumped and panted away towards its goal. For the rest of the day the railway lines were entirely deserted. In the evenings Efflam watched the sun reflected back from those shining bits of steel.

He felt drawn towards the railway track and followed it towards the sinking sun. The stones rattled lightly as he walked. He plodded along, sometimes between the lines, sometimes on the path at their side, sometimes he jumped from sleeper to sleeper.

The country became more desolate—marshy, with budding, close-growing rushes and shining pools of water. Stiff-leaved irises grew there with half-open calyxes from which the yellow petals had begun to push their way out.

Following the railway line, he arrived at Saint-Fiacre from the back, but however the roads and little streets twisted and turned, they all led him inevitably to the high ground facing the sea. The deafening roar of the waves round this chaos of sharp, spiky, broken-up rocks burst upon him with its usual force. For a long time Efflam remained motionless, holding on to the iron railing which had been erected for the sake of safety. Below this point the iron memorial cross was moulded into the cliff. The railing pricked and cut his hands, for it was not only rusty but it was deeply corroded by the salt.

It was here that on Easter Day itself he had met the messenger from God, an angel who had appeared just as they used to do in olden days in the human form of a man. Here he had been warned and instructed. Here he had given his promises.

He had had much to think about, much to astonish him since that day. Not least the answer to his who and what—this answer that lay so near, but which he had found such difficulty in grasping and understanding. Now he tried to interpret it in the witch's cauldron at his feet. He tried to read it in the sky-high cascades that shot up above his head, and in the shimmering rainbow mist hovering over everything. He listened for it in the roaring and muttering around him.

A light mist had formed above the surf close in to land, and beyond it stretched the sea. There was the sun, big and round, but reddish-brown as if holding a copper shield in front of its face. The waves soon touched the very edge of the sun itself. The warrior was torn between two elements, was stretched out and became oval, would soon have been divided into two—but no, the sea was victorious. Only a round ball could now be seen above the water-line, and even that was quickly drawn deeper and deeper down.

A red spot lingered, still bow-shaped. Then only a dab of colour, a splash. Then nothing, only shadows and solitude.

Efflam was drawn in longing towards the empty horizon. Bowed down by loneliness and the still unsolved riddles surround-

ing him, he turned his back on the darkening water and returned to his own village. Then the ocean, quenched and empty, began to speak again. He who walked upon the waves let his footsteps be heard. Efflam bent his head in fear; that which he heard confirmed that he was one of the chosen ones.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

EFFLAM CAME IN WITH HIS WEEKLY WAGE, and as usual Marie Le Donche took the bundle of notes quickly as though she wanted to hide it out of sight. But, in spite of that, she hastened to repay her debt of gratitude by the offer of food and drink.

Efflam, therefore, was soon chewing pancakes and drinking tepid, sweet white wine. Marie-Jeanne, her crochet in her hand, sat away by the window in the last light of the day, while her sister, humming to herself, ironed pale pink slips and gaily coloured frocks and frills.

"How you work and work," said her mother. "There's no need to make yourself so grand for that day. It always rains when there's a *Pardon* at Kerscaven."

"I don't think it will rain this year," said her daughter hopefully. "It will be good weather this year, Prince Efflam, won't it?" she added.

"So that you should be able to go on the roundabout and dance," said her mother.

"Yes, of course that's what I want. What else can you do at a *Pardon*?" laughed Caroline, holding up the frock she had just finished pressing.

"Look at this! Isn't it pretty? Isn't it, Prince Efflam? I'll show you my new shoes. They have open toes and heels. Look!"

"What a child you are," said Marie Le Donche, and gave Efflam the bowl of tea which on special occasions she always made for him. "You are a simple, worldly child, but I understand that you must amuse yourself while you are still young. You may dance and enjoy yourself both for your sister and me."

"Isn't Marie-Jeanne going to the *Pardon* in Kerscaven?" asked Efflam.

"No, Marie-Jeanne is not going," answered her mother shortly. "Take plenty of sugar, Monsieur."

It was Sunday, and people passed the house in a never-ending stream on their way out of Kervily. Efflam alone walked in the opposite direction, going towards the old village. He met Caroline in her flowery artificial silk and her heel-less and toeless shoes. She had put her cycle against the fence and was pumping energetically, so energetically that her hair fell down over her face like a long, black fringe. Marie-Jeanne and the older Marie were both standing at the entrance of the house. Each leaned against one of the doorposts, and each looked in her own direction, both equally melancholy. The face of the younger lit up when Efflam suddenly appeared, and she burst out:

"Aren't you going to Kerscaven, Efflam?"

"I wanted to ask Madame Le Donche Garrec if she would allow Marie-Jeanne to go with me to the *Pardon*."

Marie Le Donche looked vexed. With her lips pressed together and her cheeks drawn in, she began to chew slowly.

"I have said that my daughter is not to go to the *Pardon*."

"Then, Madame, I cannot go either. Will you allow me to stay here with Marie-Jeanne?"

The widow was again surprised and more annoyed than ever. She herself was about to start for Mass. The neighbour who was going with her was already turning the corner of the street. How could she leave the two alone in the house? Alone in the quarter, in fact—because everybody else had gone off. That would be much worse than allowing them to go to the *Pardon* together. After all, it was a little hard to say no to both requests. She lifted her face with the high, outstanding cheek-bones and looked through her spectacles at Efflam.

"I do not want Marie-Jeanne to go to Kerscaven. She finds it difficult in the crowds. Then, too, one can never be sure of getting a seat in the bus when returning from such a festival. All sorts of people go there. It is a sinful gathering. All *Pardons* ought to be forbidden. The priests have better things to do than to encourage people to come to those fairs. It is worse in Kerscaven

than anywhere else. It has always been so. It always rains on that day too. But off you go! And God be with you, my daughter."

Before she had finished speaking Marie-Jeanne had left her door-post and was standing in front of the looking-glass, arranging her coif, changing her apron and finding her violet-blue scarf. Soon she and Efflam were on their way to the bus, while the older women walked towards the parish church. Caroline's bicycle pinged joyously as she turned corner after corner. Theirs was the last little house in that part of the village to be closed and locked.

In the quarter adjoining them, however, there was a house that was still unlocked. The Lescantins had that very morning fetched their boy from hospital. Caroline's bicycle-bell drew young Hugo to the window. Pale and hollow-eyed, he stayed there as long as he could see her on her high saddle. Longingly and bitterly his eyes followed her along the road until his mother told him to come and lie down again.

Efflam and Marie-Jeanne had reached their goal. Propelled by the crowd, they hurried up the single village street, past the old, low farms with their little squares in which the pigs were kept, past cafés and shops, till they reached the square in front of the church. They went on a little farther, where both the village and the fair came to an end. Here they turned and came back the same way down the street. Again they followed the crowd, sauntering along up the road—and down again. Very quickly the crowds had increased, so that they soon found themselves shut in by a living, noisy wall.

Marie-Jeanne's head-dress stuck up among the others. She was happy, first of all because she was with her friend and was holding his hand, and secondly because of the lovely and unusual scene around her. Efflam himself walked in silence, gazing wonderingly at the motley crowd of women as well as at the men he saw around him. Fishermen with narrow, half-closed eyes and awkward grins strolled along in their simple, clean fishermen's blouses. There were farmers, too, wandering about in their broad-brimmed felt hats with long, floating ribbons down their backs. Their coats were more solid, but less well kept, and they had darker beards and skins. Now and again people turned aside to let swaying,

half-drunken youths pursue their happy, laughing, shouting way through the slowly moving human wall. Or else they stood still crosswise, their eyes rolling, their necks stretched, showing their Adam's apple.

The noise became greater and greater as each hour passed. An amusement fair with its noisy paraphernalia had been set up in the narrow street. Crude-coloured celluloid shapes, feathers, coloured paper, and glass and twinkling tin glittered and shone in all directions. Jars of sweets in all the colours of the rainbow were displayed in rows. Oranges, bananas and biscuits were sold everywhere. They were bought and eaten and the skins were thrown about, together with the paper from the candy floss which was licked so greedily. Corks popped both inside the cafés and outside in the stalls set up temporarily for the sale of drinks. Swarthy gipsies held out loaded guns to the passers-by, calling on them to try their skill. As the shots hit the old, empty jam-jars lined up on a shelf the sound echoed again and again. A surging rhythm of languishing, sentimental songs came from a gramophone loudspeaker and penetrated everywhere over the church square. Accompanied by this and the creaking and whining of the machinery of the merry-go-round, the young people tore round and round in the chair-o-plane. Shrieks of horror and delight blended in with all the other noises.

Every third minute the whole neighbourhood was shaken by a noise as if a mine had exploded. People clapped their hands to their ears while their faces were contorted by smiles and grimaces. This noise which made itself heard above all the other noises came from the ingenious strength-testing machine, which incited people to repeated trials of strength.

Efflam and Marie-Jeanne were stuck in the middle of a stationary group close to the chair-o-plane as it rushed round the artificial globe of the earth.

"Look," said Efflam, pointing. "Look, there's Caroline going up in the chair-o-plane. They're just starting it. Look at her flying! Caroline is flying round the world. Her hair is standing out straight like a board. Her head is strained sideways. How hard it's strained! If her head flies off I'll promise you to catch it, Marie-Jeanne!"

"Do be quiet, Efflam!" shrieked the girl, putting her arm

across her eyes. "Efflam, I don't recognise you when you talk in that sort of way."

He smiled—no, he leered. His whole expression was different. Then he asked—and his voice was again more like the voice of the man she knew and loved:

"Don't you like all this, Marie-Jeanne?"

"No, I don't like it. That chair-o-plane is frightful, and I am tired of all this noise."

Efflam became thoughtful. Yes, that was it: the din, all this row that, as it were, slashed and split his head. But suddenly his ears caught a new sound intermingling with all the other languishing and shrilling mass of sound. It came and went as a fire flares up and dies down again in the wind. It came intermittently like like the sound of a bell-buoy in a heavy sea. It was the ringing of the church bells. He became aware of the old Calvary, the three crosses half hidden by the merry-go-round. They reminded him of the crucifix over his bed at home.

"Marie-Jeanne, what is a *Pardon*?" he asked. "Why are we here? Why is all this going on in Kerscaven?"

"Because it is the annual *Pardon* at this church. That's why we're here and that's why the whole village is having a festival."

"What is a *Pardon*?"

"A *Pardon*? Why, it's a *Pardon*. We always have *Pardons* in the summer."

"Why is he asking all these questions?" she thought. 'He must know what a *Pardon* is.' She felt sad and sank down deeper so as to rest her hip and her foot which had to bear all the weight. Then she pulled her-elf up again and stood on her toes so as to rest her knee and her hip. Never before had she been so tired and dejected as now; never before had she cared so little about sticking it out.

"*Pardon*," said Efflam now to himself. "Forgiveness, re-prieve."

"Forgiveness, re-prieve," repeated the girl softly and with a feeling of wonder. The conception of a *Pardon* was connected mostly with the fair and dancing and the amusements. That was the usual, but now—she looked up into Efflam's face as he stood so far above her, she who in her smallness had people like shading trees all around her. His face was again as she knew it.

"Shall we go into the church?" she asked, and he went without another word.

Bare and without ornament, the rough stone walls of the church closed round them, but the nakedness of the walls was offset by the flowers on the many altars, by the flames of the candles gleaming in the half-darkness, by the smell of incense which lay suspended under the vaulted roof. The sentimental gramophone songs, the music from the loudspeaker, and the shots were still heard, but now only intermittently every time the church door was opened.

Marie-Jeanne and Efflam dipped their fingers in the holy-water stoup and made the sign of the cross. Then they took a few steps forward and knelt down each on their side of the central aisle.

Close to the pillar where Efflam was kneeling was the altar of Our Lady, and as he looked at it the spectacle he had just left out in the church square seemed to him nothing but a seething witch's cauldron like the one he had seen over at Saint-Fiacre. Above this *Tal-I-fer* (the door to hell) stood the Mother of God, in her white and blue garments, and over her was an arch of white and blue flowers. Never had the Virgin Mother seemed to him more fair, never had she seemed more pure and spiritual than now—so close to the great, worldly crowd and yet not of it. This festival was not only a *Pardon*, it was also Whitsuntide. Those who measured their strength out there and played at exploding mines, those who walked about showing off their fine clothes, those who flew headless round and round had not yet realised that the old stone house so close to them was flower-decked as never before, and that the lights had been lit. For the many chairs stood empty—

But the bells were ringing more and more insistently, and the church began to fill. The door banged and was finally left open because so many people were hurrying in. The noise from outside was heard in church more clearly than before and disturbed those who were already on their knees.

Efflam heard the cling-clang and the bangs from the street. He heard the shouts and the laughter from the whining chair-o-plane. In imagination he saw again the crookedly bent heads protruding from the small, low cages, he saw again the shrieking mouths. Had not she also her head turned to one side, she who stood there

under the flowery arch? Was not her mouth laughing? Then surely he also must laugh. And he laughed—to the annoyance of all those near him. Marie-Jeanne, however, did not hear him, she sat with her rosary in her hand, praying with closed eyes.

Once again he laughed. It was a laugh mixed with childish delight, with distaste and light surprise.

Marie-Jeanne looked up; anxiety gripped at her, and she stood up. Out in the aisle she put her hand in front of her eyes, so terrible was the expression on his face. He was no longer her Prince Efflam, but a person who filled her with horror. And yet there was something in this transformation that she recognised from her experience of life. There was something in all this that she must acknowledge and with which she must concern herself.

She looked once more at Efflam. He had closed his eyes. The long, closely-set lashes were pressed down on his olive-brown cheeks. His lips were pinched together and his mouth was strained in a curious way. She fell on her knees in the middle of the aisle and bowed down until her forehead touched the floor. Then she went up to the high altar and knelt close to the tabernacle.

Efflam started in his stupor and found that there was movement in the church. People were getting into position with banners and standards and were moving towards the exit. He and Marie-Jeanne followed at the tail end of the procession, turning with the others round the corner of the church. They passed through the churchyard and walked on between the graves. A steady rain began to fall. People began to leave the procession, especially the men, who had in any case been slow in coming forward and who were walking exactly in front of the two young ones. The rain provided them with a suitable excuse for drawing aside. They looked for a moment towards the lee-side of the church in case they might find shelter there, but soon left the procession altogether and went down towards the fair.

In this way Marie-Jeanne and Efflam had the women just in front of them. Suddenly the rain came down in a violent down-pour, causing a great confusion among them. Stiffly and solemnly in their black and white costumes they lifted their hands to their coifs and, looking prayerfully at the grey sky above them, they collected their skirts and began to run back over the graves and

the stones, seeking shelter in the niches of the church wall. Soon they had all left, the procession, and the two young people had a long, empty space between them and the procession itself. The girl drew her escort towards the little opening in the wall through which the banners and the statues had disappeared.

Efflam walked along silently. He had a dim feeling of being pushed forward in the crush and the half-darkness. Down a steep, narrow flight of steps he was pushed out on to a grey, bumpy road with bushes on either side and with people in front of him in the drizzling rain. A strangely dressed, dwarf-like creature was walking behind him like a deformed shadow of himself. It waved him forward with small, short, round hands, hurrying him on.

Marie-Jeanne trudged onwards and prayed for the little procession, prayed for the corn on the rain-soaked fields they passed and—most of all—for the growth of faith in the hard, stony ground of human hearts. Prayed for forgiveness, for mercy. Efflam's question had made her take the actual word *Pardon* in a more realistic way. She remembered, too, that it was Whitsuntide, the day when the Blessed Apostles were inspired by the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, send a ray of light into our hearts, cleanse that which is impure, quicken that which is unfruitful, heal that which is sick.

That which is sick! After all that she had seen to-day she must think especially of Efflam when she said this prayer. He did not need anyone to trouble about his health. He did not need to consider his body. 'But—the soul also can be sick', thought the young girl. 'Doubt is the same as sickness. And is not evil much more so?

She stopped, terrified. She was thinking of evil—not of evil in general, but of the evil she had seen in her friend's face and heard in his laugh. Or had she made a mistake, had she seen and heard wrongly? Was it her own eyes that were evil?

O bienheureuse Lumière, purifiez ce qui est souillé!

She lifted her eyes and saw that the cross leading the procession had turned and was coming back in the direction of the village. The fringed banners were soaking. Slowly and jerkily, as if they might fall over at any moment, came the statues of the saints on their platforms. The ankle-length vestments of the priests, the

nuns' veils, the little girls' hair-ribbons, all were wet and flat and clinging.

Soon they all reached the village, and like a band of small vessels in a stormy sea they were either absorbed in the crowd or floated above it until they reached the square. Here they twisted and turned, past the stalls and the cafés and the roundabouts up the broad, open, but crowded steps to the church itself, into the emptiness and silence of the House of God.

Later, when Marie-Jeanne and Efflam came out of the church, they were met by a clear sky and brilliant sunshine. The merry-go rounds whirled ever more wildly, with a shriller whine and with an ever more vibrant loudspeaker. The strength-testing machine exploded almost without a stop.

Marie-Jeanne stood there, very pale, looking at all this and wishing that some good fairy would come and spirit her home to her own door and to her quiet crocheting. She stole a look at Efflam. There he stood on the top step, his red costume clinging to his body, his hair and cheeks glistening from the rain, and with the crowd moving in front of him. Marie-Jeanne suddenly forgot her fatigue, her black eyes became awake and excited. What was going to happen now, she asked herself when she saw his face. A trembling passed over it. Then he lifted his arms and his voice penetrated the noise:

"Come unto me, all ye that seek to deaden the longing and hunger of your souls with the goods displayed in the stalls of the fair. I will lead you to health-giving streams. Listen to the voice that cries. My watchword is *Travail, Famille, Patrie*."

"*Travail, Famille, Patrie*—work, family, the Mother-country," echoed astonished voices down in the square. "What sort of motto is that? We've heard it before."

"Come unto me, I will teach you a new heroic faith about the value of blood, race and personality and the eternal laws of predestination!"

The words were lifted up and were drowned, were lifted up again as the clamour rose and sank. Those few who had cared to listen and who had detected some meaning in what he said began to wave and bellow.

"Listen to him!" they shouted. "What's he talking about? Isn't there something familiar in it all?"

"Yes," shouted someone from another direction. "We've heard it before. Silence him, knock him down, the half-drowned rat."

"We haven't heard it all yet! Wait—quiet—quiet!"

"I have not come to do miracles——"

"Miracles? Quiet, all of you!"

"—for my kingdom is not of this world. But bring me the impurities and blemishes of the soul and I will purge them——"

"Purge, he says. Now he's coming back to his laws of predestination. Shut him up!"

Rotten fruit and stones began to hail down on Efflam. Marie-Jeanne caught hold of his arm and tried to drag him away from the exposed place where he was standing. Then there was suddenly a new kind of commotion down in the street, and the attention of most people was turned away from the speaker.

"Give way there!" somebody shouted. "Get to the side there! Here's a cripple who wants to reach him! Help us to carry him!"

"Come, Efflam, for heaven's sake come away," begged Marie-Jeanne in despair. They were carrying a sick man towards Efflam, a wasted, colourless man who looked as if he had not seen the light of day for several years.

"Give way there!" they shrieked again. "The Prince from Kervily is in Kerscaven. He can cure the sick and teach the lame to walk. Help us for the sake of all the saints to reach him!"

Efflam again lifted his arms in a big gesture and cried:

"Halt! Jehovah, the Creator, has not sent me to waste my power on your poor bodies. You who allowed the healing streams of the martyrs and the saints to be silted up with all sorts of impurities. Open up the wells and clean them, and let the cripple wash his limbs in their healing waters!"

"It's all nonsense! He's mad!"

"No, no. He has pointed us to the two martyrs and to the old spring which had power to heal long ago. Come, let's do as he says!"

"Here come the police, that's the end of our sport!" said somebody.

"Don't let them come, don't let them touch him!"

"He ought to be shut up. He's mad and dangerous . . ."

The most hot-headed went on wrangling over the heads of the crowd, and a new shower of rotten fruit was thrown in the direc-

tion of the steps. Marie-Jeanne herself was hit this time, her apron and coif stained and the latter almost knocked off her head. She pulled and dragged at him. She felt as if she had to fight to save him again from a wild and stormy sea. He himself stood with his arms hanging down, without protecting himself, and as if he scarcely knew what was happening and less still what was said.

At last she got him to one side. Breathless and flushed as if her cheeks had never paled either from fear or fatigue, she dragged him, bare-headed and with his hair ruffled, into the churchyard among the graves where they had so lately walked in the procession. And out through the little gate. Then they were quite alone, with the noise far in the distance. The girl recovered her breath and swallowed her sobs. She took her protégé by the arm and went on along the stone wall in the direction of the bus station. When the wall came to an end they went on, past the last houses in the village. Efflam allowed himself to be led along. There was an expression on his face as of someone who is obeying without understanding the reason of all that is being done.

"Efflam," said Marie-Jeanne suddenly. "We won't take a bus. We won't go in among all those people again, we must walk home."

"Yes, Marie-Jeanne," he said obediently.

Happier, the girl walked courageously on, straight across several lanes whose one end led out into the main street, which was still crowded. Now and again somebody strayed into these lanes, otherwise forsaken—an old man or a woman tottering home, or young people running playfully after each other.

On the side of the road bordering the fields, high bushes grew, almost resembling trees. Marie-Jeanne walked on, her courage high, but she did not like the darkness under the mass of foliage. Efflam walked with his chin pushed forward, listening, waiting, and the whites of his eyes shone when he looked from side to side in the silent dusk.

Suddenly there was a rustling among the leaves. Somebody laughed, the twigs were pushed aside and an untidy head of hair appeared. It disappeared and then appeared again. Dark hair, happy, shining eyes, a brightly-patterned frock.

"Caroline!" cried Marie-Jeanne, quite taken aback, but her

sister was already far away among the houses. A young man ran after her.

"Not now," shouted Caroline. "Later! I'm going to the chair-o-plane again. I'm going round and round and round."

"I'm anxious about Caroline," said Marie-Jeanne. "She used to go about with Hugo and no one else, but now he's ill she's running round with just anybody. What shall I say to Maman when we get home, Efflam? I'm the eldest, and I ought to look after her." She looked up into his face to find counsel and comfort, but his expression terrified her anew. Again she saw that look for which she could find no other word than evil.

"Heal that which is sick!" he whispered. At Efflam's answer she started as if she had scarcely expected to hear him speak in a human voice.

"Caroline is running about without her head," said he.

"Without her head! O St. Teresa!"

They wandered homeward along the edge of the hard motor road. As mile after mile disappeared behind them the landscape became more and more flat, the wind increased, the silence grew. The light twittering of a bird was heard in the furze bushes along the side of the road, the thunder of the sea came nearer and nearer.

'It's as if I've had a bad dream,' thought Marie-Jeanne. 'A nightmare. At last I can see the church tower of Trécultré. The lighthouse is rising out of the sea. I can see the spire of the chapel of La Joie against the sea, too, and the horizon itself is clear and clean.'

She looked at her companion. His forehead also shone pure and clear. His eyes were as mild as goodness itself. His usual dreaming melancholy lay over his mouth.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

IT WAS *PARDON*-TIME IN BRITTANY and every village had its procession. It had also its roundabouts, shooting-galleries, strength-testing machines and languishing songs from the loud-

speakers. Every little church and every little chapel in Tréoultré was each in turn decorated for its own particular feast-day. It was not the big church in the middle of the parish that was the object of the most active plans and preparations, but the little chapel out among the rocks. The older people liked to talk about the great day approaching, children dreamed about it more than they dreamed even about Christmas or about the St. Nicholas *Pardon* in the chapel by the lighthouse.

Jehan Lescantin was the only one whose mind grew dark when the *Pardon* at La Joie was mentioned. The promise he had never fulfilled lay gnawing at his heart. The less meaning he found in the saying: '*se vouer au blanc*'—to clothe oneself in white in honour of Our Blessed Lady—the more unwilling he was to dress himself up and join the procession.

Lescantin was more alone than usual to-day, for he had left the seaweed and was grappling with the prawning-creels, which had to be repaired and tarred. He was working just below the high wall of the factory and piled up the small, black jars as each one was finished. He had promised his son to fish for prawns. Hugo was taking a long time to recover from his broken rib. He had only just lately begun to pull himself together properly. He longed to go to sea, but at the moment he had to content himself with shorter journeys—first of all with the prawn fishing which he and his father were going to do together.

Lescantin was happy when he thought of this and his tar-brush worked to a little clearly-whistled melody. While the creels were drying he thought he would rake what remained of the seaweed into heaps farther up the shore behind the edge of the dunes. It could lie there until he had time to deal with it. In the meantime he and Hugo would be working together.

His heart became so warm that he felt a lump in his throat, and he began to sing in a husky voice:

*"La brise enfle notre voile——
Voici la première étoile
Qui luit——*

Yes, nights at sea with the boy. Gloomy solemn evenings and mornings with a rising sea. They were not going very far

out, scarcely outside the islands, but even there the sea would receive them, making them feel as if they were in mother's arm's. It might also mean a little money. Prawns were highly priced.

Lescantin's thoughts had taken a good turn, and again he sang a little bit of a song. Then suddenly his wife stood in front of him, although he had not seen her coming. She was barefoot and as usual dressed in black, but a new expression, a milder expression, had come over her broad, dark face. The husband and wife stood for a time silently beside each other. At last the woman spoke:

"The seaweed is ready for burning."

They were silent as before. He went on working, and she placed her seaweed-fork against the wall and pulled out her ball of thread and crochet-hook from her pocket. After a while she spoke again:

"It's dry enough."

After some time the man answered:

"There's no hurry."

"One never knows what the weather is going to do."

"No."

"I can work with Tanneau and his wife and get it done."

"No."

"Why not?"

The questions and answers came at long intervals. There was a longer pause. Madame Lescantin made no further attempt to get her husband to explain the reason for his 'No'. Instead she began again in a rather lighter tone of voice:

"I went to the tailor and gave him my order."

"What for?"

"For a suit for you. He has a lot to do for the feast in August and for that reason I thought it well to be in good time."

"What feast do you mean?" asked Lescantin, who knew, none better, to what she was referring.

"The *Pardon*, of course. Now that you no longer go to sea for the fishing you are certain to be on land that day, but you have no good suit to put on. And it is best to do the thing properly: I asked both for a blouse and for a coat." Then the wife turned her back and went away without waiting for a reply.

"The suit—for the *Pardon*, of course," mumbled the husband

to himself. "There may be two opinions about that matter."

"If not three," said a cheerful voice, and Lescantin, who for the second time was caught unawares from behind by someone with barefooted, silent footsteps, started. He felt calm when he saw that it was only jolly, worldly Le Lay.

"Yes," he said, "there are, of course, three of us. It may be that Hugo, who is young and wants to make an impression on the girls, thinks that he has a greater right to new clothes than an old man like me. But the *patron* can scarcely have heard what we were talking about. Surely you are not all-knowing—like certain others I could mention."

He bit his lip. Why the devil had he added those last words? Le Lay gave a loud 'Ha-ha' and turned round gaily holding his long, rubber boots, with their wooden soles, in his hand.

"Ha, ha! No, not like a certain someone we know of, but like someone who can reckon out a thing or two with his brain. Everyone knows that the great miracle-worker rules both you and your family, Jehan, isn't that so?"

"What miracle-worker are you speaking of?" asked Lescantin with a vacantly questioning expression on his face.

"Now you look more stupid than you have any right to look, Jehan. See here—now what in the world did I do with those Lucky Strikes I had on me? I put them down somewhere or other—look here, Apostle Jehan, take one! They're a little squashed, but they're all right."

"Yes, indeed," said Lescantin, his good humour now quite restored. He took both the cigarette and the lighted match, and puffed. Then he stroked his thick lips with a tarry finger.

"Yes—they're all right," he said. "Talking of the miracle-worker, have you heard the latest? About the miracle in Kerscaven? The man is healed. I've seen him myself. He's walking. With sticks, of course, but he moves better out of doors than he has done for some years." He lifted his voice: "Listen, you others over there, come nearer and listen, for the Apostle Jehan does not hide his light under a bushel. He proclaims the good and what the chosen of the Lord has done among his people. He had commanded the lame man to wash his limbs in the ancient well, and after he had done so the man stood up. He stood up upon his own legs! And he praised God and him whom

He had sent. That's what happened at the *Pardon* at Kerscaven."

"Well done, Jehan Lescantin!" shouted Le Lay. "Splendid! Now you've preached enough for to-day. I'll also state a few truths. Other things besides holy wells were spoken of in Kerscaven. It is not only crazy women and sick people who are interested in your chosen one. The police have an eye on him and that is that. Now you can go on."

Le Lay wiped the sand off his feet and put on his high rubber boots with their enormous wooden soles. With a teasing wave of the hand he went towards the pier. The seaweed workers and others who had come nearer looked after him, some reproachfully, others with a laugh. Jehan's eyes rolled more wildly than before. He stubbed out the half-smoked cigarette and trampled it down into the sand. Then he shouted after the retreating figure:

"The police—yes, of course! Whom do you think Herod and Pilate used when they were trying to keep order? As if the police had not always had an eye on him of whom I am speaking. But no hair of his head shall be touched. He will be received up into his rightful element without human help."

"And what is that element, Jehan Lescantin?" asked somebody.

"That has not been explained to me, but each one can draw his own conclusions. And he who has ears to hear, let him hear . . ."

So Lescantin's peace had come to an end again. He was troubled because he had shouted at his former *patron* in such an aggressive tone of voice. Le Lay had always been decent and helpful to him.

After supper that night, when Hugo was already at his books and his wife at her crochet, Jehan broke out in a harsh voice:

"When am I to go to that tailor?"

"Friday evening," answered his wife calmly, for she had never doubted but that her husband would do as she wished.

"Then I have a couple of days' peace. I'm going out for a moment. I want to speak to Le Lay."

Hugo asked, without looking up from his books: "Is it true, Papa, that you and Le Lay had a preaching contest down below the factory? And that you were rude to him?"

"Who says that?"

"Oh, I heard it out in the village."

"You mustn't listen to gossip, Hugo!" said Madame Lescantin. Her son laid his book aside, putting a couple of fish-hooks between the pages to mark his place.

"One can't stop one's ears to everything," he said. "I also heard it said that Madame Lescantin never does anything without first consulting that shady Prince."

His mother laughed. Hugo joined her almost against his will, an uncertain laugh in which both astonishment and relief, but fear also, were hidden. He looked up at her furtively and waited a long time for an answer. He wondered what her laugh really meant. At last she said:

"Yes, my boy, I went to Prince Efflam when you lay here wasting away in spite of what the doctor wrote out for you. Afterwards your appetite came back and you got much better."

"That's right," said the boy ungraciously, "but it was after my visit to Dr. Bernard in Concarneau that I began to pull round."

"Yes, because Prince Efflam had suggested that I should take you to him. 'Go to Concarneau,' said the Prince. 'Take Hugo with you and go to the first doctor on the right.'"

Hugo clenched his fists so violently that one of the rusty hooks penetrated his skin. "What in the world——" he began, but got no further in his uncertainty and amazement.

"Yes, you remember that I took you there, and we found Dr. Bernard. You have to thank Prince Efflam for your recovery and that you will soon be able to go to sea again, Hugo."

"I'm going out," said the young man, as if he were almost suffocated.

Once out, Hugo crept with bowed head along the nearest wall. He did not want to be seen, at any rate by one particular young girl who lived near to him, by Caroline Garrec, whom he usually went out of his way to meet, so anxious was he to see her and speak to her. His mother had so flattened him out that he wished to get away unseen, all the more since Caroline had lately shown herself anything but anxious to meet him.

Hugo went to the place in the main street where the men usually congregated and stood there, waiting for someone to come and join him. He had to wait some time. The men were still at home, at

their meal or busy at their evening occupations. He fought down his depression. It tormented him to think that in the village his case was considered as one of the 'miracles'. If only he had not such a longing to get to sea again he could even have wished that he were still on the sick list. Better that than that it might be said that the miracle-worker had done anything for him. At last he heard a step, at last he would have company.

Lescantin went a turn down by the harbour without finding Marcel Le Lay. He went back, and, having opened the door of the *patron's* house and shouted in vain both for Marie-Louise and her husband, he finished up by looking in at old Garrec's house. There sat the lorry-driver, Buanic, with the children clustering round his knees. The kitchen was misty with the fumes of frying.

"The *patron* is not here, I see," said Lescantin morosely and began to go away without even having been right inside. He was anxious to meet Le Lay at once so that he might get that little episode cleared up as soon as possible. It was odd it was so difficult to get hold of him. All this searching for him had made it into much more of a thing than it was originally.

"Marcel went down to the harbour on a message, you have just missed each other," said Guillaume. He added eagerly: "Come in, Jehan, and taste our pancakes. Marcel is taking some of them with him so that he is sure to look in before he goes on board. See here, take a chair! Is it not so, Madame, that you are inviting the good Jehan to taste your pancakes? And another glass, too, if I'm not mistaken. I could also do with——" He lifted his empty tumbler and looked imploringly at Marie-Suzette. The latter turned her broadest and most unsympathetic side to the table and panted over her low frying-pan. She knew what they wanted without looking.

"You're lifting your glass, Guillaume-Marie. Don't you think of your health at all? Bernadette, bring a plate and a glass for Monsieur Lescantin and ask Rose to give you the Negrita bottle! And you, little Eliane, are you ready?"

"Yes, Grandmère!"

Eliane was just running off, but Buanic caught her in his arms and kept her prisoner between his knees.

"Wait, wait, and mind you brake round the corners! What

are you thinking of, going off to our Prince looking as you do! Let me tidy you!"

With his thick fingers he loosened her hair-ribbon, found a comb in his breast pocket and tidied the ruffled hair, after which he tied a bow.

"There you are! I don't believe your own mother could have done it better. What do you say, Madame Buanic?"

"Oh, you're always full of nonsense," said Marie-Pierre, turning round. "Do you remember what you have to say to Prince Efflam?" she asked her little daughter.

"I'm to say that we're all longing to see him. That he has stayed away too long, and that we want to find Maman's silver slipper before the *Pardon* next Sunday. And if we can't do that we would—we would—"

"Ask him——" Guillaume helped her when she began to hesitate.

"Ask him humbly to let us find it before the Great *Pardon* at La Joie. Then I am to give him the pancakes and wish him a good appetite and good health from Grandnère."

"And cheerful spirits from Grandpapa," added Guillaume.

"And success and good luck from Father," said Buanic.

"And from me lovely sunshine such as we have in Provence!" broke in Lucie as she sat in the doorway, working a little clumsily at the complicated thread gloves. "And Loulou sends him his heart," she added.

"Yes," said Eliane, and kissed her little cousin. "Now I can go. No, there come Uncle and Aunt. Hi! What good wishes do you send to Efflam?"

"Are you going off there again?" said Marcel Le Lay.

"Yes, because Grandmama has made pancakes again, and Prince Efflam has not been here to taste them. What shall I say from you too?"

They sent their good wishes like all the rest.

"And what are you going to say for yourself, Eliane?" said her grandfather at last. "What are you going to wish him?"

She turned round and looked with shining eyes at the many big and little ones who had all spoken so kindly, in fun, but with a certain seriousness behind it all. "Oh, I," she burst out, "now it is my turn, I shall wish that Prince Efflam may soon get his crown

and that it won't hurt him too much! That's my wish. Now I'm going, Grandpapa."

"Yes, here's the parcel. Walk carefully and mind the traffic when you get out on the main road."

"Wait!"

It was Lescantin's voice, more harsh and unfriendly than he had meant it to be. They were all silent, looking at him. The little girl stopped just as she was beginning to run.

"Why did you not ask me? Am I no good? I who am his true apostle. Answer me!"

Eliane swallowed—"Ye—es," she said at last. She swallowed again and turned her clear eyes upon the agitated, scornful man. "What message shall I give him from you?"

"A real cross, like the one he is always raving about."

"But——"

"Go and take him what you have been given! You others have looked after the pearls. But a crown of roses always has its thorns."

Eliane ran away, pressing the warm, soft parcel of pancakes under her arm. Her eyes were blurred with tears.

It was very silent in the kitchen after she had gone. Jehan nervously moved his hand as it lay heavily on the table. Finally Le Lay coughed, and said reproachfully.

"That was a strange remark, Lescantin."

"Hm." The hand moved still more nervously. Yves Buanic found his voice.

"It was cruel, to my mind."

"Cruel, ah——!" Lescantin got up, shrugged his shoulders and prepared to go. But he remained standing in the doorway. They saw his dark back outlined against the light. His two hands moved restlessly down in his trouser pockets. No, they were clenched. Once again he shrugged his shoulders and went his way.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE SKY WAS CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT, people smiled at each other with a tinge of melancholy. There was no excitement, but a light expectancy in the air. The *Pardon* at the ruined church at Kervily was so outside the list of the year's *Pardons* that neither roundabouts or stalls had been set up. No shooting-galleries or strength-measuring machines had reached this little place.

Efflam Kelou went with the Garrec family, who had all collected at Guillaume's house for breakfast. Some of them had brought chairs with them from home.

The fishermen were all sitting on the stone wall near the church like sea-gulls in rows on the breakwater, but, unlike the birds, they sat silent, bent deeply forward with eyes shut and hands folded between their knees, listening to the sounds that came from the roofless church and that could be heard for a long way round.

The simple door of the ruin made of boards had been lifted to one side, and a group of young people stood just outside the opening. Some of them were kneeling out there in the street, piously taking part in the service.

Marie-Suzette, clutching the chair which one of her sons-in-law had brought for her, pushed her way purposefully forward, lifted herself over the threshold and almost fell down into the low-lying floor of the church. Guillaume followed in her wake, and he and others also managed to get inside. Efflam had Loulou on one arm and Marie-Jeanne's chair in the other hand, and when people saw him they were anxious to make room for him. He walked forward towards the altar and put down the girl's chair where he could find room for it, and then he and Loulou withdrew to a corner by the door.

With endless variations, and yet with a monotony that was at first tiring, then solacing, and finally uplifting, the congregation were saying the rosary.

This hymn of praise went on for a long time, while people came wandering in until they were all collected and quiet. And then again with new power and with new variations:

"Hail Mary, full of grace."

Again and again the same refrain sounded. The priest knelt on

a provisional platform—like a watchman at his post; or someone defending a position, who did not intend to give way an inch. He had the loudspeaker in his hand as if trying to drown all the noisy din and humbug of all the fairs in Brittany, as if trying to wake the war-weary, the apathetic all over France. Commanding, praying, convincing.

"The Lord is with thee"

Praising with all the glow and intimacy of the human heart:

"Blessed art thou among women"

And with amazement and wonder

"And blessed be the fruit of thy womb Jesus"

And then again as if repeating a lesson to be learnt by heart or an important piece of work it was essential to get quickly through

"Hail Mary, full of grace"

Monotonous and monotonous, like the roar of the surging, ebbing waves on the beach. Appealing, liberating —

From the top of the broken, sun-bathed walls of the church came the twitter of the birds. Now and again they darted like fishes among the sardine nets which decorated the church. All this huge, infinitely fine fishing tackle swung like ethereal arches crosswise over the ruin. A sail was stretched above the altar at the farthest end.

Efflam's feet began to hurt because he had been standing so long holding Ioulou. He held the boy high up on his left shoulder. The ground in the middle of the church was grass-grown, but here next to the wall there was only gravel and pieces of stone. He did not, however, think of his own weariness. He also was drawn in, liberated.

The large priest, whom he saw through the meshes of the floating, green-blue vault, was very impressive, almost terrifying. Efflam always hurried away when he heard the rattle of his old car, and the horn always woke him out of his dreams. He used to move away when he heard the swish of the long, narrow soutane down the aisle of the chapel at La Joie, and he always avoided the strong arm that shot out to pull at the bell-rope. To day the priest appeared larger than ever. He was the Church personified.

"Blessed art thou"

Over and over again. Efflam was drawn into the rhythm and

was unconscious of everything in himself except his feet. He had left his sabots outside and was standing in his thin socks. The chips of stone pierced his soles. Part of his brain was working like that of a man who dreams.

Perspiration ran down his cheeks, and he staggered as if he were about to fall. Someone pointed to a stone seat sticking out of the wall behind him and told him to sit down, but he could not move, could not lift his feet. They were nailed to the spot.

The nails——! He had a perception of sharp-edged nails cutting into his feet.

"And blessed be the fruit of thy womb."

He was dripping with sweat. Yes, he was nailed fast and could not move a foot. His body also was stiff. Something pressed and weighed down on his forehead. Was it—the crown?

His cheeks and lips grew slowly grey and suddenly he sank down between those who stood so tightly wedged around him. Somebody loosened Loulou's arm from his head and took the little boy from him. They put their hands under his arms and helped him on to a stone seat jutting out from the wall.

It grew clearer again round Efflam, but he still felt the pain in his feet and the weight on his forehead. Now the rosary was finished, and the priest stepped down from his platform. He was so tall that he towered above all those standing round him, and like a ship which knows its course and was sure of the power which drove it forward, he ploughed his way through the packed church down to the farthest corner. There he stood, with book in hand, continuing to take part in the service. Efflam still sat on the low, jutting stone, and the priest's feet were quite near him as they stuck out from under his black skirt. They were a large pair of feet even for such a tall man, and in everyday life he often wore sabots. They looked as if they could trample down any obstacle that might come his way and lift their owner across precipices and bottomless pits.

Efflam was gripped by the strange fever he so often felt when he walked alone on the sea-shore.

Was this the man that he so often heard? Was it this black-coated man who in the dark nights seemed to come from out there and with thundering footsteps cross over land and sea?

If that were so, he must be God Himself.

The perspiration streamed down his forehead. No one can see God and live, as the good book says. But he saw. Alone among the people here he saw Him in the midst of them. And he still lived! The Father had shown him grace without equal—— The next moment he lay bowed down at the great feet.

"Bless me, Father!"

At that moment the collection began, and Efflam's low sighs were lost among the rattle of coppers. Those who had helped him before took hold of him again so that he was able to stand. He remained on his feet, spent and apathetic, and would have fallen again if the two men had not continued to hold him up between them. When he was able he lifted his eyes and saw that there was an empty space down there in the corner; the giant had disappeared. The clatter of coins and rustling of notes was over. The head of another priest could be seen against the red sail behind the altar. Harsh Breton words rolled among the grey stones.

"That which has been destroyed and cast down shall be built up again. The work on these ruins will soon begin and the people of Kervily will again say their prayers in this ancient and holy place. In the same way our country will again become great and splendid. For France is like this chapel—a ruin compared to what it used to be. But it still stands—the walls remain. They are strong enough to carry a new roof."

The walls still stood when those who had been assembled there for the service poured forth bearing with them the treasures of their parish church lent for the occasion. Among them was a statue of Joan of Arc from Notre Dame de La Joie. The Maid of Orleans was dressed in armour, her head bare and her helmet at her feet.

Bareheaded also were the four young men who lifted the platform on which the saint stood on to their shoulders. Most bareheaded, most exposed and vulnerable of them all was Hugo Lescantin. He was nervous of the onlookers and of the assumptions they might make when they saw him, of the gossip that would go round. He did not wish it said that he was one of those who 'believed' in that Prince. It was enough that his mother had asked for advice and direction, and that his father had time after time stood up and testified. He did not wish to be involved himself.

Apostle Jehan!

He would have none of that. And he would forget the sorrow of his heart in the same way as he would avoid looking in the direction of a certain red-cheeked girl. He would think of her he was carrying—St. Joan, pray for those who are timid as a hare and uncertain as a weathercock, but who long to become defenders of their country.

All the villagers walked in the procession in deep ranks up streets and down, away to the fields where the growing corn was blessed, out on to the pier, where a new boat was sprinkled with holy water. Only walls of silent houses, sun-kissed corn and flowering potatoes, and the blue, calmly rocking sea were there as spectators.

The only two persons who were not in the procession had gone off by themselves. One was Jehan Lescantin; the second was Efflam Kelou.

Jehan had sat on the stone wall outside the chapel. When the priests, servers and choir-boys, the nuns, and the men and the women, with the figures of the blessed saints, and all his comrades prepared to take their places in the procession, Jehan also stood there, calm and good-natured, cap in hand, ready to join them, then he heard two men standing near him gossiping together.

"Look, there's Hugo Lescantin; he's well enough to walk in the procession. They say he was cured by the Prince and that he has become as zealous a disciple as the father."

Then Lescantin looked up and saw his son. He was still thin in the face and thinner and more angular than the other three boys who were carrying the plastron of the saint. But there was something of steel in the blue eyes. Lescantin's full lips curled a little, and his own eyes—as blue as his son's but half-hidden under his projecting eyebrows—began to send forth sparks.

So they said the boy was as zealous a follower as his father. As if he, Jehan himself, had ever been a follower. He had joked and acted—but they seemed to have taken his pretence in earnest. When had Bretons given up seeing a joke? Was it since that strange man had been fished up out of the sea?

Those two nights when Hugo and Jehan had been out after prawns had been nothing but a game of hide-and-seek between father and son. Both had been violent, both awkward with each

other. The father had said to himself that the boy had worries about women. Before Hugo had been injured and had to go to hospital, he used to run around with Marie Le Donche's girl and take her to the pictures. They used to stand and bicker over the walls, frankly and fearlessly, so that anyone who cared to listen could do so. After the *Pardon* at Kerscaven their friendship seemed to have come to an end. Caroline was forever hurrying off somewhere, no one knew exactly where, Lescantin least of all. But he had become more friendly and indulgent in his manner towards the boy.

Now as he stood here in the street and saw Hugo pass with his gaze fixed so sternly in front of him that he did not even notice his father, his sympathy was swallowed up in annoyance. Had the timid mother's boy, in his disappointment about the girl, turned to Prophet Kelou? Did he sneak away to secret meetings with the big-nosed carpenter's assistant? And he, Jehan himself, was said to be the one who had 'converted' the younger. He would put an end to the jest—at any rate from his side.

The head of the procession was far up the street, and the hundreds of women and children were passing now. Then the men stepped solemnly forward, bringing up the rear. One man was left standing alone at the door of the ruin. It was Efflam. A little farther away stood another man—Jehan Lescantin.

Lescantin approached Efflam violently. He was through with joking, now he would speak a few words of truth. It was right for the boy to have worries about girls—they belonged to his age, but he must not seek consolation from that type of calf-eyed dreamer. That would never make a man of him.

But before the fisherman had reached him, Efflam had turned aside and was walking down the nearest path. Jehan remained where he was, crestfallen. His lips moved as if he wanted to call Efflam, but not a sound came.

Well—that finished it—for the time being, at any rate.

He looked round with a hurried desire to hide himself. He was afraid to remain alone in the deserted village in the clear daylight. He must get away before the procession came back this way.

Efflam followed the little path to the Drezens' house. When he

reached it he found that it was all locked up, even the outer door to the general stairs was locked. He sat down on one of the laundry-tables, and from there he saw the procession in the distance, winding its way through the village, the metal cross glittering in the sunshine. The banners shone pale pink, green, gold and white, and the almost windless air brought the faint sound of singing towards him.

'Marie-Jeanne,' he thought, 'why are you not here? I carried your chair for you as if you had been my own mother, but now that I need you you are limping energetically along in the procession thinking of your own saints.'

He was lethargic, his mind as it were empty inside him after the long service and his deep emotions. When they had taken Loulou from him it was as if the link that bound him to the crowd in the church had been snapped. Like a fragment, completely unconnected with those round him, completely meaningless, he had stepped aside, remained behind and mechanically found his way home. He felt forlorn and abandoned, and this feeling weighed him down.

He sat looking up into the high heavens above him, and his eyes lost themselves in a thin, bluish-white haze that shone and dazzled him. Down in the bay, too, the water gleamed and shone, but the points of rock shone dark in the surf in a half-circle outside the point like the teeth of preying beasts.

He stared so long out into the sharp light of day and directly against the sun that small, dark spots began to dance in front of his eyes. Half dazed, he walked towards the door of the workshop and pushed it to the side just enough to allow him to pass through and feel his way to the carpenter's bench.

To-day there was a greater difference between the outside and the inside of the workshop than on ordinary days when the broad door stood wide open. The light through the cobweb-covered window shone dream-like on to the machines and tools and on all the finished work leaning against one of the walls. The transparent shadow of the cobwebs themselves trembled on the newly-finished chair that had been hung on a hook in the ceiling. The backs and legs for several others of the same kind lay on the bench, and from old custom Efflam's hands moved over the wood, feeling it with his sensitive fingers. He had worked on Saturday

afternoons on these chairs, which he intended to give to Madame Stéphan.

The shavings rustled as he moved, and he started half-frightened at the solitude in which he found himself. Together with the feeling of loneliness came this great, strange emptiness that he had never felt before, and at the same time a sobriety that made reality come nearer to him than ever. He saw himself as he was—a broken link without the power to hold fast to family or nation. Why was it so? he asked himself, looking absently at the wall opposite him, where most of the timber was assembled.

Why was it so?

All these planks and ribs and headings formed a pattern of their own. Long straight lines, with here and there one lying across the others.

They had advertised for his family, but in vain.

All this wood came from forests and saw-mills far away, but perhaps most of all from Brittany's own forests. The fir trees from Riga were unobtainable, Kér-la-érec had told him. But how about the wood from the Black Forest in Germany? He wondered if some of the timber had come from there.

Efflam's brain busied itself indifferently with the question which came to him only because his eyes were looking at the wood and found so few central points on which to focus his thoughts. The Black Forest—black crosses—conceptions and associations that had been imprinted on his consciousness in the past came to the fore again.

Black crosses.

Suddenly there seemed a strange, new silence in the quiet room. It was as if his ears had been locked up, so solidly, so tremendously did the silence press down upon him. His eyebrows were drawn together almost meeting over the bridge of his nose. His throat worked so strongly that it could be seen.

No, it did not disappear; it remained before his eyes: a black cross. Not many small, black crosses like the name of that forest always conjured up, but one great big black cross. As high as a man, broad and powerful, it stood there dark against all the lighter wood. It sprang forward with the strength of a revelation and illuminated like a flash of lightning that which up till now had only been confusion and dim suspicions.

The minutes, yes, the hours passed, and Efflam still felt as if he had received a hard blow on his ears, or as if he had dived deep down and heavy masses of water had closed in above him. The nerves of his ears began to throb and strain.

All that he had lived through and experienced since he woke up on the beach of this village stood clearly before him. He knew now that up to the present he had gone around in a strange world of mist and had felt and spoken and acted on command. Nothing that he had done had been thought out beforehand.

The strange things he had spoken and done bore witness to who he was, and the witness came from above.

There stood the cross!

No —! He smiled with pale, stiff lips. Smiled at his own sober wakefulness; but the blood throbbed in his temples and his wrists.

It was not a finished cross, this cross, this thing that stood there in front of him. He realised already that it was only two dark, stained boards that had been placed there accidentally in such a way that they formed a cross. Just because, in the midst of all this, he could see this, just because the revelation had come to him in such a sober moment, it was all the more convincing. He was now bound to believe it.

The cross had once been the hard bed upon which he had lain outstretched. The ladder of torment by which he had climbed to the throne of world dominion.

And it was not yet enough. The cross had been cut down, cast away, and the people of the world had chosen other rulers.

And now he had been sent here for the second time to suffer and save anew.

Would the consummation this time be also by crucifixion?

Efflam faced the question submissively expectant, but no answer came. It had not yet been revealed how it would take place, but the way of suffering, the way of sacrifice lay before him. That seemed certain. For had he not, in spite of the veils of mist that surrounded him, had he not already begun to tread this path?

Yes. But in the future it would be still more demanding. This day the Father himself had shown Himself, first through the priest in the church, then through the revelation in here in this humble

workshop, and in the sight of the All Highest the mists had been rent asunder like sea mists before a storm. Now he who stood here, knowing the truth, would no longer be led forward like a defenceless child. He was now of age and from this moment he must be led by his own will. His will to fulfil that for which he was sent.

It would be incredibly more difficult. For was he not here as weaker than the weakest? As a wage earning carpenter's apprentice—and nothing more?

Efflam moved his benumbed limbs and looked round the room. The drills, the planes, the chisels, the lathes. And then the circular saw of which dear old Guillaume was so terrified.

He closed his eyes and tried to remember another carpenter's shop. Another foster father, who had himself handled the tools and had taught him his work. Almost two thousand years ago. A thousand years is but as a day in the sight of the Lord. How would he be able to leave this room with his tremendous knowledge?

He looked at himself. Looked down at his simple cotton suit, at his clogs, at his work worn hands. He thought of his home, his surroundings.

As he was and with the clothes he now stood up in he would work outwards, wake the world and conquer evil!

The day passed. The sun moved towards the west and the house by the road threw its long shadow over the workshop. The inhabitants of the house began to return but they hastened past the workshop without noticing that the door was half open. They hurried up to their kitchens and smoke soon began to rise from the chimneys and the stairs were filled with smell from their soup-kettles.

Efflam stayed on in the dark, shadow filled workshop. He clung to it as firmly as at one time he had clung to his sick bed. In here were both horror and fear, but out there the heavy demands on him were waiting and even greater horror.

He was afraid that he would never dare openly to declare who he was. He began to have some conception of the scorn with which he would be met, and he shivered at the thought of the final consequences.

The cross—or something else, whatever it might be.

Others would perhaps acclaim him. They had, in fact, already done so. He had followers already, disciples, but in the final horror he would have to stand alone. And there was no return. Then it came over him that in order to be able to carry out his task he must keep his eyes fixed without ceasing on the symbol of suffering and sacrifice—the cross.

When the Kér-la-éc family returned in the evening from their relations in the village Gérard noticed at once that the door to the workshop was not quite closed.

"You go in," he said to his wife and daughter "Perhaps Kelou has been working on his chairs and forgotten to shut the door I will push it to"

Before he did so he looked in for safety's sake to see whether anyone was in the workshop. What he saw startled and amazed him. He drew back his head and wondered whether he were awake or dreaming. Then he put his head in again. He had seen aright. The sight was as gruesome and as fantastic as he had thought.

In the semi-darkness in there a man lay stretched out on a cross.

A cross! It was down there on the floor between the various working machines. Kér-la-éc went in and stopped just inside the door, he hung on to the door handle with one hand behind his back, unconsciously putting himself into a position in which he could escape if need be.

The 'crucified one', conscious of the intruder, half rose and remained sitting on the cross it. His face beneath the untidy sawdust-covered hair shone with a ghostly light. The upper part of his body was naked, so were his feet. His clothes were thrown to one side.

The two men stared at each other in silence. Kér-la-éc tried to find words, but his throat refused to act. Finally the other rose and lifted up the heavy cross. Then at last the carpenter was able to speak.

"But Kelou—Monsieur Kelou—Prince—I do not understand. What can all this—?"

Efflam half-lifted, half-dragged the cross over to the wall and placed it there near to the place where he usually worked. Then

he turned and, panting as if he had been running or had been working very hard, he almost stammered:

"Will you—allow me, Monsieur, to keep this cross which I have joined together with your boards? May it stand there where I have put it? It is necessary that I should have it always before my eyes."

"Well, yes, but—I—I—do not understand——"

The carpenter could neither pull himself together nor understand. He picked up Efflam's shirt and coat from the floor and held them out to him. After some hesitation, Efflam took his shirt and pulled it over his head, hiding for a moment his wildly untidy hair, his sombre eyes and colourless face, and he dragged it down over his dark, lightly hairy chest, where the ribs stood out so plainly. Kér-laérec remained where he was, holding out the red coat. The other looked past the garment to the man behind it.

"Gérard Kér-laérec. What you have seen was only a reminder and an exercise. Do not mention it to anyone."

"Er—no—er—but—I understand nothing of all this "

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for to them shall much be revealed."

"Won't you come in now, Kélou?"

"Yes. But give me your hand, Kér-laérec. I I am afraid to take a step forward."

The carpenter gave him his hand and helped him out of the workshop into the house.

"A little soup will do you good," he chattered, still confused and uncertain as to how he should act. "Some good, strong soup. It's all ready in there."

"Take me upstairs please, Monsieur."

The other complied with the request and led his staggering apprentice up the stairs. He asked again:

"Would you not like a bowl of soup and a little bread?"

"Let me be. And say nothing until the spirit moves you to witness of me."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

MARIE-JEANNE WOKE with the impression of a dream that seemed to her both as uncanny and as impressive as some old saga. She

remembered it very clearly, but she told no one—no one except St. Teresa. While she knotted the celebrated 'Irish knots', producing finger after finger of the thread gloves, she had spoken her thoughts to her protector.

"O St. Teresa, my dream was so strange. What can it mean? It was not an ordinary dream with people one knows, but it was more like when one opens a book and reads, or when somebody tells a story. Yet I saw the whole thing happening, saw it more clearly than I now see the white roses in the vase here—for now my eyes are dim with tears, but in my dream——

"I thought that a woman, a wife—the person in the story together with myself—had had her husband killed by the family enemy, who had taken his heart. This heart was now placed in the hands of the wife and she was told that it was a hen which she was to prepare. But she saw what it was she held in her hands; a large, red heart still warm, the heart of her husband. Then she dropped it, and it broke into pieces at her feet and much blood flowed from it. She herself ran away in despair. She ran and ran until her own heart burst and she fell down dead.

"O St. Teresa, O Mother of God, this dream has made me feel so strange, so depressed. I do not understand it, but I beg you: pray for my friend "

She had not seen Efflam since he had gone with her to the ruined church and had carried her stool. When the procession was over she had expected to find him among the men of the family, but he was not there. She had been told later by Gérard that he had found Efflam at home in the workshop. The carpenter would say no more, although he seemed as if there was something more to be said and that he would have liked to unburden himself.

Now she could no longer endure not having seen him, and not knowing how he was. Still working industriously, she moved over to the doorway, out past the wall—then slowly towards the cross-roads.

Who was that coming up the main street if not he about whom she was thinking and worrying? He was dressed in his ordinary clothes and was carrying an enamelled dish. She could not resist stretching out her hands towards him:

"Good-morning, Efflam!"

"Good-morning, Marie-Jeanne," he said, returning her greeting. "Do not touch me," he added and turned aside.

Surprise and anxiety made the girl's face sensitively alive. She realised immediately that to-day it was more difficult than usual to make contact with him, but she tried to be calm and natural and stood on tiptoe to look at the dish he was holding.

"What a lovely turbot! Is it for Blanche?"

"Yes, Madame Kérlaérec asked me to go and fetch it."

Now he moved his thoughtful gaze from the fish to Marie-Jeanne and said reproachfully:

"Marie-Jeanne, I expected you yesterday, but you did not come."

She started. It was almost always so. He made her both happy and terrified. "Oh, Efflam, if I had only known," she said remorsefully. At the same time the smile in his eyes brought happiness into hers.

"Be comforted, Marie-Jeanne. I needed you, but it was my father's will that I should be alone so that I might come of age. Now I need you no longer."

These words, said so simply and quietly, took away all her happiness, but no pause was allowed either for despair or hopefulness, for he added in a low, charming voice:

"But you need me, Marie-Jeanne."

"Yes, Efflam," she acknowledged, and her face was stilled and immovable. What she had called happiness was now nothing but a piercing sorrow within her, but she knew that what he had said was true. She needed him so as to have someone to care for and someone to care for her. So that she might be able to wait, wait—wait for something that might never happen, but it was better to wait than to have nothing. Yes, very much better, it was almost as good as having something to hope for.

"Now I must take the fish to Madame Kérlaérec. *Kenavo*, Marie-Jeanne."

"*Kenavo*," she burst out, startled. He turned and went away. She only just managed to capture the friendly glint that appeared suddenly in his eyes, which were generally so distant. The Breton word of greeting filled her with such joy that she would have been completely happy if only he had not already been out of sight.

"O Saint Teresa, he says that he no longer needs me. It is as if the world were cold and desolate. As if something had at last become firmly settled; as if the towers and battlements of my dream castle had been frozen into hard, dead ice. Yet he said *kenavo*, and he smiled mischievously like a real Breton. He says he no longer needs me. He turned aside so that I should not touch him. Dear Saint Teresa, I cannot understand, I can only say: pray for my friend."

Little Eliane again arrived with a packet under her arm and knocked at Efflam's door. Blanche down in the bottom flat heard her and called out:

"He's not there, Eliane. Go to the workshop. He's working on Madame Stéphan's cupboard." And the little girl trotted quickly downstairs again, pushed her feet into her sabots, which, still warm, stood outermost in the fleet of sabots under the stairs. Then she clattered away to the workshop:

"Prince Efflam, pancakes!"

She carefully placed the packet in its grease-spotted paper between the wood shavings and the tools. "It's from Grandmère. She wishes you a good appetite and good health. Take them! Look, Prince Efflam, do you want me to open them for you? Do you?"

She could not control her eagerness that he should begin to eat the pancakes at once.

"Prince Efflam, why do you never come to us on Saturdays now? Why do you work on Saturday afternoon?"

"There's so much poverty, I am."

She looked at him, her eyes big and puzzled. Then she became happy and important again.

"But, Prince Efflam, you've come to put everything to rights again; I should like to help you, if I can——" She suddenly broke off and pointed towards the wall.

"What's that?"

"My cross."

There was silence in the room. He went on screwing hinges on to the kitchen cupboard he was making of which Blanche had spoken. The child's eyes filled with tears. She crept up to the high wooden cross on the other side. She genuflected, made

the sign of the cross, and crept back the same way to Efflam. Then she said confidentially:

"Prince Efflam, everything is beginning to come right. You've got the cross that Monsieur Lescantin wished for you. And the sun is almost as hot as it is in Provence, Aunt Lucie says so. She wished it for you. Now you'll get the crown too and all the other things. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, Eliane, if I can fulfil my destiny."

"What's that?"

"To suffer and save."

"Is it the same as to help people to get rid of their poverty?"

"Yes, the poverty of their souls."

"And then we shall all be happy."

"Yes—all happy—in different ways."

"Tell me what I must do, because I'd like to help you, Prince Efflam!"

"Tell everyone you meet that you have seen a halo round Prince Efflam's head."

"Yes, but——?" She grew hesitant. She wondered whether she had really seen the halo or not. "Yes, but——?"

"Look at me, Eliane!"

He stood straight and commanding in a way that she had never seen before. His hair lay, as always, thick and wavy round his head, black with a sprinkling of copper when the sun struck it. The red in it shone. Yes, it shimmered——

"Do you see, Eliane?"

"Yes, Prince Efflam."

"You see the halo?"

"Yes, Prince Efflam."

"Tell everyone you meet about it!"

Eliane set out homeward a little confused and shy at the thought that she must speak to everyone she met, but anxious to do so.

The first person who came towards her was the rich Mlle. Jegou on her way to the cemetery. The little girl greeted her politely and then hurriedly gave her message in the same breath:

"Good-morning, Mademoiselle. I've seen a halo round Prince Efflam's head."

The stiff-necked lady pursed her lips in a superior 'good-

morning' and went on. But suddenly she started and looked round:

"Come here! What was that you said?"

"That Prince Efflam—that I saw a halo round Prince Efflam's head."

"Prince! Pouf! What's this rubbish you're going around with? A halo! Do you know what a halo is?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle, it's a light that shines round the heads of the saints."

"Well, stop talking nonsense then!"

Mlle. Jegou tossed her head with its high coif and walked on.

The next person Eliane came across was the village shoe-maker, Kerlivio. He was a war invalid, a youngish man with something girlishly soft about his cheeks and in his large, happy eyes. And yet—or perhaps just for that reason—everyone thought him a very handsome man. He was so clever that, with the crutch under his arm, he was able to break up the soil and cut stones for his own house—all in his free time. He was just now on his way to the quarry outside the village when Eliane stopped him. He returned her frank greeting in a friendly way.

"Good-morning, little Eliane Buanic. How are your father and your mother?"

"Fairly well, thank you, Monsieur." Then she blushed, but he looked at her encouragingly and she was suddenly eager to speak to him:

"Monsieur Kerlivio, do you know what I've seen?—I've seen a halo round Prince Efflam's head!"

"Say it again, Eliane!"

"I saw a real halo round Prince Efflam's head!"

"Did you now! A halo, what did it look like?"

"Oh! Light—yes, light. Like a little sun."

"Did you ever! That's strange. It must have been very pretty. I wish I could see something like that. I've never done so yet. And what do you think it means, Eliane?"

"I don't know." She looked thoughtful and then she asked: "What do you think, Monsieur?"

He smiled at her. "What do I think, what do I think—? Perhaps he's a chosen man, a holy man."

"Yes, yes, that's just what I wanted to say, but I couldn't

remember it. Thank you, Monsieur. *Au revoir*, Monsieur."

"*Au revoir*, little Eliane!" His crutches sounded against the asphalt as he hopped away to his work. The girl hurried on and had turned a few corners and walked past the old castle before it was again time to deliver her message. She stopped and waited, for the person she wanted to meet—or pass by—was talking with someone else, and Eliane knew that it would be impolite to intrude in others' conversation. He was talking to someone two gardens off.

"Surely you've time to go to the pictures," he shouted.

"Perhaps I have, but I don't want to, not with you at any rate."

Eliane was all ears. It was Caroline's voice, and she was speaking to the Lescantins' Hugo.

"I've said that I don't want to go with you. There are many others with whom I would much rather go to the pictures," said the unfriendly, girlish voice.

"That's a pity," thought Eliane. "Why can't Caroline be decent and go with Hugo?"

"Who are the others?" asked Hugo.

"That's nothing to do with you."

"Why are you like this? Did you meet anyone special in Kerscaven at the *Pardon*?"

"If I did—do you think I should have told you about it!"

He pulled his beret further on to his head, pulled it right down over his forehead and came towards Eliane. He was walking very quickly, and she had to put herself right in his way.

"Hugo, Hugo—hullo, Hugo, one moment!"

"What's the matter now?"

She felt that she must not go too briskly to work. Therefore she began in a friendly, conversational tone: "I hope you and your father had luck with the prawning. But perhaps the nights have been a little too light. After all, the prices are fairly good now——" She chattered on in an old-fashioned and sophisticated way. Hugo had an idea.

"Listen, Eliane, have you seen Caroline going about with any young man? Or do you know what it is she's after when she bicycles over to Kerscaven?"

"I don't think that she goes to Kerscaven. I believe it's to

Trémeur that she goes. They say that she's looking for somebody she met at the *Pardon*."

Hugo listened impatiently, but interested. "Who is it?" he asked.

"I don't know. I don't think Caroline knows either."

"Oh, she's sure to know. Why should she go off in the way she does, if she doesn't?"

"She's looking for him. Can't you help her?"

"That's a good idea. If we met he'd get his deserts."

"I could ask Prince Efflam—oh, Hugo, I knew there was something I wanted to tell you: I saw a halo round Prince Efflam's head."

"You can tell that to someone else. I'm not in the least interested in your Prince. Good-bye"

He went off, and Eliane looked after him. Had she said it properly? Or would he forget it because of all the other things they had been talking about?

Hugo sauntered on, depressed and brooding over the information he had just been given. She had met *somebody* that Sunday. And *something* had happened. Could it be possible that Caroline and this somebody had afterwards and immediately lost one another? Why did she rush about the roads the way she did?

Hugo kicked the gravel in front of him irritably. His toes, which stuck out between the straps of his open sandals, were soon grey with dust. Once more he dragged at his beret and then let it slip far back on his sun-tanned neck.

"I'll be damned if I'll do that," he burst out suddenly, speaking to himself and then swearing loudly. This was in answer to his own thought whether he should go and consult that 'prince'. He remembered Eliane's words: a halo. Good Lord! Well, why not?

Efflam carried the new kitchen cupboard to the widow up under the roof and asked if he might instal it now.

"Yes," she answered shortly without changing her sullen, rather frightened expression. However, she lifted her washing-basin and other toilet things and then moved the old packing-case which served both as a cupboard and a wash-hand-stand. Efflam

pushed the new white cupboard into its place, the boy Jean helping him vigorously, while little Marie-Chantal pirouetted ecstatically in front of the lovely new piece of furniture. When the cupboard had been put in its place Efflam bowed and said:

"I hope that this will please you and that you will find it useful, Madame. May my foster-father, Holy Joseph, bless this house."

"How much?" came as shortly as before from Madame.

"Madame knows that it will cost her nothing."

The young woman looked confused, but suddenly she bent down and hunted among the bottles in the corner by the stove. She brought a dusty rum bottle out into the light, shook it and turned it upside down. Then she put it back in the corner and showed her regret by turning a pair of empty pails outwards. Efflam went towards the door. There he turned round once again, looking with an absent-minded gaze at the three in the room:

"Madame, the top flight of stairs in the house is scrubbed every Saturday. The corridor downstairs is also scrubbed, but nothing is done to the lower flight of stairs."

She listened in her suspicious way. By degrees she showed more interest. Then she lifted her high coif into the air and seemed to grow. She was in such a hurry that the words tumbled over each other:

"No, that flight of stairs is not so good. The Goeffrys and I take turns with the top stairs and the Kérlaérers do the hall at the bottom. The foreign gentlemen in the middle flat never think of those stairs, and you—and you—I'll scrub them down. I'll also tidy your room and scrub it once a week."

"Madame, I have come to obey and to serve, but blessed is he who sees in the servant of the servant his rightful master. Blessed be you and your children!"

Yvonne Stéphan's face was again immovable; so terrified was she of what she had dared to suggest that she did not take in Efflam's solemn words. Her pride had been saved, and she felt relieved in the knowledge that she had found a way of repaying him. In spite of her suspicious nature, she could not but feel drawn towards this man who never lost a chance of helping her, who served her and went errands for her while he maintained the superior absent-mindedness and indifference which so seldom went with kindness and understanding.

Fear returned into the woman's eyes. There had been much gossip going round about him. They said that he was something apart. Someone had even said that a halo had been seen round his head. She herself had never seen those rings of light except in pictures and had scarcely considered them to be more than a fanciful decoration. Now she had been too shy to look at him as he stood there so close to her, so much taller than she was, so strong in the atmosphere with which he filled her little home. She only dared look at his hands. They had done so much for her, those long, golden-brown hands. Not only had they made one article after the other of those things she so sorely needed, but he had carried pails of water up the stairs for her and often took her garbage-bins down. He brought up her firing and had given bits of food to Jean, who was always hungry. He lifted up little Marie-Chantal so carefully when she fell into the puddles or if she stumbled on the stones. A person possessed of so much goodness certainly had a right, if anyone had, to a blessed halo round his head.

Emotion seized the harsh, reserved woman. Suddenly she seized Efflam's hands and kissed them—warm tears fell on them. When he turned round to go, and she looked after him through her tears, it was as if she really saw something glitter and shimmer round his head—even round his whole person.

The large cultivated area inland between the villages had altered a great deal. The long, wet, green spring was transformed into a summer with a burning, mid-summer sun and quick ripening. The bluish-green wheat reached up to his waist as he followed the path through the fields, and there were already thick spikes, angular with seed, fast becoming the same colour as the mounds of yellowish-green butter displayed on the shop counters and on the round dining tables. The country round him was now more open, for here the stubble lay short and stiff, and the light earth had been sucked dry. And there the bristle of the corn-fields, which had lately been so lightly silver, had now become brown-tipped.

The territory rose slowly towards more stony ground. There the corn-fields were still pale, and the potatoes had only small, black leaves attached to their grey stalks. The Colorado beetle

was on its way from this withered place, the reddish-gold scales of its wings shining in the grey dust.

Efflam was soon out on the low sand-hills, covered with yellow furze, which also crept along the ground and hid itself in the long tough grass, from which it pushed out its claws and grasped at the wanderer as small hobgoblins might. Efflam walked on and allowed his legs to be scratched. He had caught sight of a larger and more threatening hobgoblin in a copse of taller bushes. Its sulphur-yellow face shone large like a giant moon. He hesitated. There was witchcraft in the air over these barren sand-hills with their small, secret hollows, with menhirs placed high upon the edge. There were also strange whistlings in the light wind that slapped across the thin, limp grass, puffing hairy seeds and sighing over his shoulders close past his ears, where it tittled and tattled.

Efflam turned his back on the hobgoblins and dragged himself loose from the small, black, crooked arms that continued to hook themselves fast to his trousers. At the same moment he saw a crucifix a long way off. Immediately he lifted up his head and began to chant a hymn and continued on his way, singing. If all monsters of heathendom were lurking in their hiding-places or standing on guard, watching for him, he would go forward towards that which, like a sign full of foreboding, rose above the low, pale hillocks.

The rising wind whipped his slender body as he walked due west, where the sea lay strong and fresh. He crossed flat, sandy meadows, where the ox-eye daisies raised their white, transparent petals and the light-coloured heath flowers spread abroad their strange, dry, rancid smell. The red of the thrift paled almost to invisibility in the sharp light.

Suddenly the wanderer saw in front of him a still paler, a still more shining sand-field. It was spread at the bottom of a high sand-dune which in a sharp drop put an end to all growing things and in its great, strong curve united the two dark, rocky tracts at each end. The amazing evenness of this 'meadow' dazzled and enraptured him by its purity, which was as clear as day. In white, snorting haste the waves rolled up into the bay, springing forward joyfully like a group of spirited horses, their hoof-beats echoing against the rocky promontories. Outside the bay the sea lay

majestically calm with its slow, heavy wave-movement—while it still boiled and beat against the coast here. Efflam's ears were full of the eternal roaring and hammering.

The cliffs on the one side were well known to him. They were the outposts of Saint-Fiacre, and from here he had often watched the sunset. Beyond the other darker and gloomier rocky tract he found a new bay with new, never-resting masses of water storming towards him—if indeed it could be called a bay, this beach land, scarcely bent, which faded away in a cold, grey mist. Here the grey paleness of death held sway. Deserted and uneven as a moon landscape, solitary as the country of the damned, the long beach stretched away, away into the unknown.

Efflam shuddered: was this the abode of lost souls? He thought he saw them crowding restlessly along the beach. There was room for many. He felt dragged irresistibly towards the cold, grey mists, and was gripped by fear.

"Get you gone, Satan!" he broke out suddenly, trembling with determination.

He had come to conquer death and to gather in the unhappy souls and bring them home to the dwelling-places of his Father. "Get you gone, you tempter!" he shouted. "My way does not lie in the salty, deathly mists, but upwards towards the hills of light."

He went off quickly up among the sand-dunes again. He hastened his steps and did not look back, and once again he began to sing while he clambered from hillock to hillock. Here the air was dry and the earth became more and more radiantly clear. And wonder of wonders—long, twisting creepers of wild pea, with full, swelling pods, were spread about in the hot sand. The wheat was short, but clean. Lightly, inconceivably lightly, the sparse wheat moved in the wind. Inconceivable also was its high, fleeting shimmer of gold. In its light the soul rose up on the wings of a lark and, trembling with happiness, melted into a sea of light.

The coast meadows, bathed as they were in light, made Efflam realise the blessedness he had renounced for that sign which he who had sent him now held again before him: yes so that he might not desert his destiny.

A spire, a cross—

To Efflam every little stone cross by the wayside was a new meeting-place, each chapel an experience.

The chapel whose spire had called him from afar lay on a little hillock. His ecstatic happiness left him as he followed the overgrown path upwards and came to the large, deserted church, round which the sunbeams played and the sea-breezes blew, but to which people very seldom found their way.

To his surprise one of the doors gave when he tried it, and, according to habit, he left his sabots outside and stepped silently in on the stone floor.

The holy-water stoups were dry, no red lamp burnt in front of the altar at the end of the church. Slowly he went right up and stopped in front of the altar—a single, long slab. He was captured by the decoration on this naked stone altar—a row of vases each with their bunch of brown, dead, dried-up flowers. Silent as before, he walked away down through the chapel.

At the door he turned and looked back. He who was to be strong unto death must be strengthened and proved through a thousand temptations. He felt himself here to be tempted by the power of the past; by the beauty in the petrified, in the naked and in withered things. He closed his eyes and prayed silently.

Efflam came out and found himself standing in front of the Calvary which he had before passed by so blindly. He was still depressed, and at first he saw only another monument of the past in the stone groups so worn and lichen-covered. Then his gaze was caught by the Saviour bearing His cross and the other figures, hewn out of the coarse granite. He began to walk round studying the four sides of the Calvary, with its double rows of history in pictures.

Slowly the reliefs which had been so ill-treated by wind and weather began to stand out more clearly; became pictures full of expression; came to life; became something which not only had been but which still was.

Then the pictures in relief grew blurred again and disappeared more and more, until the Calvary stood there as an angular block in the mist of Efflam's own warm tears. But the story was chiselled anew into his consciousness, and he carried it with him when he went down the slope. He still moved in a strange world of mist, but it was not the raw, cold mist of death, but the good,

warmly-soft, life-giving drizzle that smudged things out and gave strange outlines to all around him.

Marie-Jeanne could not get rid of her dream, especially as it was not of such a nature that she could tell anyone about it. A red, living, male heart in a woman's hand! A heart that still worked like a muscle, expanding and contracting, widening and narrowing. Which fell and broke into a thousand pieces while the blood ran in streams at the woman's feet. No, no, she could not talk to anyone about it except to St. Teresa.

She went a little distance along the road as the sun sank to see and to listen in case anything special was happening. Then she saw far away in the open land between the villages a narrow red line shining in the midst of the yellowing corn. There was no doubt, it was her prince, her friend, the child of her heart. Tears of gladness dimmed the eyes of the girl as she limped home, thankful that he about whom she had been so anxious was once more returning safely to his home.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

BERNADETTE'S AND ELIANE'S NEWLY-IRONED FROCKS, each on its own little hanger, hung down from the ceiling at Guillaume's. Light as petals they were in their fine satin. As soon as anyone stirred in their neighbourhood the draught put them in movement, and they swung round half-circle. Whenever this happened, Marie-Pierre, who had sewn all the countless stitches in them, looked up a little anxiously over her new spectacles. Much sewing and crocheting had made it her turn to visit the oculist. But just as her brother-in-law Gérard took his new dentures out of his mouth whenever he sat down to table, she herself felt most inclined to take off the strong glasses whenever she was really going to look at anything. She seemed tired where she sat fastening off the ends of thread in the small fingers of Eliane's net gloves.

Her sister, Marie-Louise, came in with a little garment over her outstretched arm, carrying it as carefully as if it had been made from cobwebs. At the same moment the youngest daughter of the

house, Rose, appeared, coming down the stairs from above. She had Odile with her—Odile dressed in a frock like a fairy-tale child.

Marie-Pierre took up her embroidery scissors, cut the last wisp of thread, took off her glasses and rubbed the edges of her eyes. Then she went and unhooked the two light-green satin leaves and took them away into the bedroom. There, on Lucie's broad family bed, lay underclothes with button-holed edges, light-green socks and smooth new hair-ribbons.

Marie-Louise pulled the round table out into the middle of the kitchen and Rose placed her little daughter, like a specially lovely flower, in the middle of the table. Then she herself and her sister finished dressing the child.

Lucie, the ugly duckling among her swan-like sisters, sat huddled by the door, rubbing up the brass buttons on Loulou's jacket. When they were shining enough she took his soft kid boots, breathed lightly on the round black buttons and dried them until they gleamed like ebony. She was very quiet. Would Prince Efflam come, she wondered? It was Wednesday and a working day, and she feared he could not leave the workshop. She would have liked him to be there when Loulou walked—yes, walked—up to the priest to receive his blessing.

Now Marie-Pierre's little girls came storming in. They had been to Tréoultré to the hairdresser. Their mother appeared in the doorway and held out the palms of her hands in dismay.

"Children, children, don't come rushing in like that! Be careful not to disturb your hair! Come, let me see how they've done it." She took hold of the breathless, excited little girls and turned them this way and that. They were both almost unrecognisable. Bernadette's sleek brown hair, that usually hung in two plaits, now stood out in stiffly undulating waves. Eliane's light fine hair hung in stiff corkscrews. Marie-Pierre was satisfied.

"Yes, he's splendid, that Monsieur Danyel, since his return from Paris. He learnt something there, to be sure. Come into the bedroom, children, and I'll dress you."

"Yes, but may we not see Odile first? Oh, what a lovely dress Aunt Marie-Louise has made for her. Only holes and holes and holes!"

Odile's short dress stood out white and stiff round her fat, little, childish waist like a shining, open-work wheel as she was twirled

round so that she might be seen from all sides. Rose held her close and stood dreaming, breathing kisses on the soap-perfumed hair while Marie-Louise pulled the incredibly small gloves on to the child's hands. Then Marie-Louise turned to her sister down by the door.

"I've also got something for Loulou. For he must be as grand as any of them. Look here!"

"Oh—a pair of real glacé kid gloves," Lucie burst out, touched. "Thank you, Marie-Louise. A thousand thanks, dear sister."

In all the homes round the coast children were being dressed in the same way for the festival. They all gathered out on the most westerly point of the parish, the region round the lighthouse, where there was a little chapel. The insignificant building was just as low and flat as the lighthouse next door to it was high and thin. To-day it was decorated with veils of green nets in which small cut-out silver sardines blinked and shimmered. On its whitewashed walls were fastened bunches of flowers, so that the chapel seemed to be hung with a flowery wall-paper. St. Nicholas waited to receive and bless the children—he stood at the side of the altar in the guise of an old, sculptured wooden statue.

Marie-Jeanne had also dressed herself up to go with her sister to the children's *Pardon*, but at the moment she stood making a cup of tisane for Caroline, who lay across the bed in the farthest part of the room.

"Go to bed properly," Marie Le Donche advised her daughter. "You've not been yourself lately, and since you've stayed away from the factory you cannot do better than rest until you've got over this attack."

Caroline buried her head in the bedclothes, obstinately kicking the floor. "Shut up! Shut up! I've heard enough about—about—— I'm going back to the factory again as soon as I can. I'm sure I shall get back by the time the sardines come. But I hate it. I hate the dirty, fishy, stinking——"

"That's enough," the older woman interrupted her. "You don't know what dirty work really is. You should have seen my childhood. Nine years old I was when I began, and wet up to my elbows and frozen and miserable when I got home."

Marie-Jeanne said cheerfully: "If you don't like the factory you can begin making thread gloves or lace as Rose does. Then

you are your own master and can do as much or as little work as you like. I'll teach you the new fashions."

"No, no, for goodness' sake be quiet! I don't want to begin with that awful work which follows you all about everywhere, everywhere day and night, and for which in the end you get paid so little. It's all right for you, Marie-Jeanne, for you who can't—I ought, of course, to have gone to the factory when the siren sounded, but—they speak so unkindly of me there. Somebody or other has slandered me. Oh, I hate them all, every one of them!"

"Here you are," said Marie-Jeanne, "drink this. It will calm you."

"No, let me be!" The girl hit out blindly and almost knocked the bowl out of Marie-Jeanne's hands. Her mother shook her head.

"Do as Marie-Jeanne tells you and drink the good tea. And as you will not go to bed, you had better go with her to the Children's Festival in the chapel. You are still nothing but a child."

"Oh, keep your mouth shut, I'm no child! I'm grown up, I'm more grown up than you think. I'm more grown up than Marie-Jeanne. I've seen more of life than she has. And I hate everybody here. I want to get out. I want to get away!"

The other two sighed. Marie-Jeanne took the bowl of tisane back to the stove and began to help her mother mend clothes. 'If only Efflam would come!' she thought. 'He would be able to calm Caroline and make her happy again, but last week he only came the once when he looked in and pushed his money under the salt-bin on the shelf' He does nothing but help people, she thought. Yvonne Stéphan's furniture was finished, but he had found other poverty-stricken people who needed their furniture renewed or repaired. This last week he had been out wandering again as he used to do when first he came, and there had been strange rumours going around about him. Several people insisted that they had seen a halo round his head. Some said that he represented himself as being a new saviour of mankind. In spite of these incredible assertions, more and more people watched him and were respectful. More and more had gone to him on the sly to ask for advice and help.

"Oh, if only he would come!" thought Marie-Jeanne, listening

to her sister's feet and clenched fist banging in the next room. Bang, bang, bang! It was hurtful to listen to it. Marie Le Donche spoke again quietly and in a deeply thoughtful tone of voice.

"Caroline, my girl, is it because you are worrying about Hugo that you are taking on so? Is it because you have sent him away and are too proud to call him back? Get the better of your pride, my child! Stop being arrogant! Ask Our Lady to help you. The love of a good man is a costly treasure. We who are so poor can hope for no other kind of happiness on this earth but that which husband and wife can give each other."

Her mother's words echoed in Marie-Jeanne's mind: "No other happiness except that which husband and wife can give each other— Any other happiness—never."

A long and dreary journey—that was all that life could hold for her, she who was so deformed and lame. If only her despair had been no greater than could be relieved by kicking feet and banging fists! 'Oh, Efflam, come, come and help us now—no, not now, not just now—I could not see you now without giving way. My fingers long to stroke your forehead, your neck, your hands. My eyes long to capture your gaze and hold it captive. My mouth desires— Oh, Efflam——'

Suddenly the old widow, to her great surprise, heard bitter sobs coming from her eldest daughter, who was generally so silent, so controlled. The girl sat there with her work on the floor at her feet and her face hidden in her hands. The humped back was shaking.

'It's not so easy,' thought her mother, 'to be alone and without a husband or a father for the two children at their ages. One of them, alas, so deformed. No, it was not easy.'

Caroline's loud sobs died down suddenly. She looked at her sister curiously, showing a red and swollen face, half-covered by the strands of her black hair. Then she said crossly: "Why are you crying?"

Marie-Jeanne went on sobbing, not loudly, but bitterly, bitterly.

"Oh, shut up! You have no cause to cry!" Caroline said with youthful egotism, as if she did not want to share even her right to tears. Marie Le Donche signed to her youngest daughter, trying to keep her quiet. She was always disturbed when her eldest daughter showed her feelings. Suddenly she said:

"If only Monsieur Kelou would come. He's always such a help."

Caroline began to sob again and repeated her mother's words: "Monsieur Kelou, Monsieur Kelou, Monsieur Kelou."

Marie-Jeanne's crochet-hook and thread again began their work. She was pale and her eyes dry and smarting. Caroline's fists again began to thump hollows in the quilt. She shouted imperiously:

"Marie-Jeanne, where is your Efflam? Is he going to the *Pardon*? Answer me! I want to know where he is!"

"If he's not working he'll certainly go to the *Pardon*," answered Marie-Jeanne.

Caroline stood up. "I'm going to the *Pardon*. I shall cycle. I want to get there quickly."

She tamed her hair with a number of little grips, reddened her lips, which were already hot, dragged her heelless and toeless sandals on to her feet, which were far from clean, and was soon outside the door.

It was very quiet after she had gone. Marie Le Donche looked again and again over her spectacles at her elder daughter. Marie-Jeanne's cheeks were still pale under her sunburn, her eyes were riveted on her work, her back as weak and helpless as before. The mother longed to ask her the reason for her bitter sobs. The words were on her tongue but did not reach her lips.

Marie-Jeanne would have liked to ask her mother a question. She had formulated a question in her mind which was never expressed:

"Is life really so poor, such a desert?" she wanted to ask. Surely it was not so! She realised, of course, that it was poor, that she had all the years in front of her to realise what it meant to be alone, alone. But she would have liked to put a question like this:

"Can married life be so rich? Can this union, these strange, incomprehensible happenings which belong to the life of love—can they contain a happiness that transcends all other happiness, making the greyest grey to shine just at the memory of them?" Then she happened to look at her St. Teresa with her broken head.

'That they transcend all other *earthly* happiness,' she corrected herself in her thought. But it was poor comfort. At that moment

earthly happiness seemed to her the only one worth longing for. Yes, even with its wrongs, its anxiety, its disappointments. Caroline might sob loudly, Caroline might bang her fists and stamp her feet. Caroline might jump on to her bicycle and rush away—in pursuit of happiness. She herself could only clench her teeth. And drag herself along. Or sit as she was now sitting.

At that very moment Efflam stood in the doorway. Mother and daughter gazed at him as if they had seen a ghost, so unprepared were they. Suddenly Marie-Jeanne burst out with feelings she had been quite unconscious of having:

"But, Efflam, Caroline has gone to look for you at St. Nicholas' Chapel. She's looking for you and wants to speak to you. Won't you go and meet her—and help her?" These last words came low, but her eyes burnt hotly. No, they shone when she raised them and frankly fixed them on Efflam.

The next moment mother and daughter were alone together. Their eyes met, and each of them read the same thought in the other's eyes: 'Have we seen a vision? Was he here or was he not here? We heard nothing, but we saw, or did we only think we saw? And now—now, everything is different, easier, more hopeful.'

The pedals of Caroline's bicycle spun round and round. She arrived at the lighthouse and saw the backs of people standing turned towards the altar which had been set up in the open air. In the centre of the ring were the children collected in front of the priest. She stood on the outskirts of the semi circle and found a peep-hole between the many heads. The precious bicycle was with her; she would never have dared to leave it unprotected out here so near the main high-road. In her endeavour to see whether the one she was seeking was there, she changed her place several times. Finally she came to the side where the prams with the babies had been left. The smallest lay voluptuously on its back, waving its arms and legs, which were not yet quite straight, but were curled up like flowers not yet fully opened.

Caroline sighed. She saw no Efflam Kelou. Very few men were there. The old, bearded beggar with his tin mug stood taking his pennies and making his monotonous, chanting noise to draw attention to himself. The thin, bent, foreign artist was there, his chin pushed forward, looking at the children. He seemed to be sketch-

ing them in his book. A gipsy caravan with some dented, rusty tin jars for shooting tests had also arrived here, and the long-legged, bony horse was feeding a short distance away. But no Efflam Kelou was to be seen.

Then she saw Lucie leading Loulou by the hand. Caroline's courage sank. 'If he's not here with Loulou he will not be here at all,' she thought. As she had nothing else to do, she stayed for a while, then went off, pushing her bicycle slowly back to the village. On her way, without meaning to, she almost collided with someone, whom she was as unwilling to see as to meet. It was Hugo, carelessly dressed in everyday clothes and with two mackerel dangling from a piece of wire. 'Those two eternal mackerel,' she thought, 'that the men always seem to carry about and especially the youths who are not yet fully grown men.' She jumped on to her bicycle and rode quickly past him. Yet she could not stop herself from turning round and shouting:

"You're nothing but a rotten old mackerel yourself!"

She was well out of earshot before Hugo had taken in what she had said, and as he was on foot and could not therefore follow her, he was more indignant than ever.

Why did everything go against him? he asked himself. Why did Caroline mock and humiliate him when in the old days she had always been so glad to keep company with him? He was not different, he was just as he had always been, and she did not seem to be going out with anyone else. If this had been so she would not have taken a day off and been cycling about alone in this way. Would it be best to pretend that nothing were the matter and leave her alone for a time? Or would it be better for him to be stern with her? Hugo grew more buoyant. He swung the despised mackerel vigorously backwards and forwards, his blood warming up. "I'll show her; just you wait, Caroline. You shall pay for your 'old mackerel'."

Spitting out her contempt of Hugo had cheered Caroline. She had begun to realise that it was useless to hope to get in touch with the man she had met at the *Pardon* at Kerscaven. He had met her only once over there close to Trémeur, and that was some time ago now. She began to feel anxious and more and more depressed. But it helped to hit out at someone. And no one could annoy her as much as Hugo. In that way he was a help.

Therefore she turned and cycled back until she caught up with him again.

"Have you left your nappie and your rattle behind you over there at the chapel?" he shouted at once.

"No, I only forgot to say that you swank about as if you thought you were somebody."

She swung her cycle boldly round and put her face close to his. Scorn, jesting, laughter flamed in the dark eyes. The next moment she was on her way again, and he only saw her energetically rounded back and her thick mop of hair. He himself pursued his way whistling gaily.

Gérard Kérlaéc had said to his assistant:

"So here we are at another *Pardon* Day, and we ought to go out and look at the little ones at the St. Nicholas Chapel; but my new teeth are so uncomfortable that I must go to the dentist and have them seen to. And then the window-frames for the new house are urgently needed."

"I'll stay at home and see to the work," said Efflam. The carpenter expressed his satisfaction at this and began explaining what he wanted done. Suddenly he stopped and began feeling in all his pockets, looking on the mantelpiece and in the tool-cupboard. In the end he asked Efflam to stop the drill and said:

"It's no good, it's disappeared. I must ask you to go to the house and take new measurements. And at the same time you can have a look at the little ones, as it's in the same direction."

"As you wish, Monsieur," answered Efflam, and pushed his carpenter's rule into his pocket.

On his way the fancy took him to go through the old village and look in on the Garrecs in the blind alley.

"—Caroline is looking for you. Caroline wants to speak to you," he heard, and he immediately turned and followed the main road towards the lighthouse. He had only just passed the large house in the village when he saw her. She and Hugo were together out there on the road.

"Caroline needs you," Marie-Jeanne had said, pale but radiant in her self-forgetfulness. Should he go to her? To them both?

"No," he decided. Caroline needed him, but she also needed to try her wings. Just as Hugo must learn to realise that he had

outgrown his childish shoes. He would not yet intervene in their relationship.

He turned off into the nearest path which wound through the pale corn-fields. There was a rustling round him as light gusts of wind passed over the field and the long leaves stroked him. He broke off a bunch of ears and began to eat the semi-hard kernels as he walked through the field. Then he heard the footsteps of someone behind him, and without looking round to see who it was he held out some of the ears behind him and said:

"My son, eat this blessed corn and be blessed."

"When did I become your son?" shouted he to whom he had spoken, surprised and furious as he now realised who it was who was strolling along so slowly and had just handed him these ears of corn. He had not been alone with this person since the fishing expedition in the *Cormorant*—no, not since Palm Sunday.

"Jehan Lescantin, why do you struggle against me like a restive horse? You know that my Heavenly Father has chosen you," said Efflam.

Lescantin looked to right and to left. It was impossible to pass the man without tramping down the corn on one or other side of the path. He murmured in a muffled voice:

"H'm—h'm, chosen me! I always thought that it was you who were the chosen one."

Now he dared to stare at the other man almost insolently, but in the end his eyelids began to flicker. It was not every day that he looked at a face with such proud features and such mild, calm eyes. Suddenly he asked, as he had asked before:

"Who are you?"

"You have already answered that question. God has put the words into your mouth. He has called you to witness for me and you cannot withdraw from your destiny."

"H'm—him——" Lescantin rolled his eyes, turned to the right, turned to the left, heavy, immovable, helpless as a captured animal. "What must I do?" he asked in a thick voice.

"Pray and believe!"

Something stirred far down in the fisherman's mind. Heavily suppressed, it began to work as when volcanic masses begin to glow and move before a final eruption. Already his fingers began to curve. He would put an end to this man who in such a curious

way both captivated and tortured him. Beat him down—hide him in this blessed corn. Show that he was nothing but what would perish from a heavy blow.

Already his hands were clenched and his elbows bent. Then suddenly his legs gave way and he lay on his knees, weeping, with the spikes of corn rustling over his head.

"My son!" said Efflam.

A few incoherent words worked their way out of the older man's breast and throat:

"I cannot—pray—or believe—give me faith!"

"You have faith," said Efflam, and, putting his hands beneath the kneeling man's arms, he helped him up. Breathing heavily, Lescantin got on to his feet. Efflam stepped aside, leaving the path free, and the fisherman passed him, looking at him more openly this time, although his eyes were swollen with the unaccustomed tears. And before he went he had made his characteristic gesture, lightly shrugging his shoulders, his short arms hanging straight down with outspread hands.

'Have I faith?' he thought to himself as he went. Had he really faith? Oh, heavens, how did he know, what did he know about himself! At this moment he felt as if he were nothing but a child. A veritable child. "God help me," he sighed. Look, there was La Joie. Next time they had a *Pardon* in the parish it was the turn of the big church. And his turn. "God help me," he sighed again. "Mother of God, be merciful to me, help me to be true to my promise."

Jehan walked more slowly. Suddenly he realised that he was praying as he walked. What had happened? Within him there was a blessed silence. He was like a child who had been comforted.

Efflam stayed where he was on the path, almost unconsciously playing with his pocket-rule. He wondered why he was walking here, how he had got here, almost as far as to La Joie. The sea dampness wove a ribbon of strong yet softly blurred colours along the horizon beyond the chapel. It was a perfect band of rainbow colours with dark violet and heavy red at the bottom, shading up to light, spiritual greens and indigos at the top. Thin veils of smoke or mist made the blue less sharp than usual. In the hot atmosphere, be-veiled by the sea mist, the tower of the

chapel and the grey gables of the other buildings with their low back-walls seemed to be nothing but condensed air. The gables, which were whitewashed, stood out all the more sharply, shining in their whiteness, but even they seemed fleeting and unreal—like loose pictures or stage sets. The smoke from the factory chimneys of Saint-Fiacre blended with the sky haze over the blue and grey-black roofs of the little town.

Why was he walking here in this warm, dry, rustling wheat-field? He stretched out his pocket-rule and touched the ears of wheat and then he suddenly became aware of the black and yellow rule in his hand. Immediately he remembered where he was going, walked on more quickly, reached the house that was being built, and took the necessary measurements.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

GÉRARD KÉRLAÉREC DID NOT AT ALL LIKE having the big cross standing in his workshop. It made him nervous. He often lay awake at night making up his mind to speak to his apprentice, to get his confidence and try to find out what was really moving in his mind. Then day came and he stood in front of Efflam, respectful and cautious, as if the latter were the master, not himself.

Efflam also lay awake at night. He followed the reflections of the beams from the lighthouse as, wing-like, they fluttered through the room. They touched the crucifix, and he looked at the out-stretched arms and noticed the strange feeling in the palms of his own hands. He felt an unusual pressure at the back of his head, on his shoulders and down his spine—he was pressed down on to something hard that did not give.

Yes, he remembered how it felt to lie upon a cross, but how would it feel to be lifted up and hang for hours? And the holes made by the nails grew larger and larger—flesh and tattered skin—

He sweated and trembled with fear. Suddenly he saw a clear picture of a wheat-field cut through by a narrow path and at his feet a kneeling man, with ruffled, scanty hair and shaking

shoulders. "Give me faith!" the kneeling man had cried.

"Give me courage!" he himself groaned. If only this time of waiting were not too long. It would be better to get right into that which was coming and be driven forwards actively towards his destiny.

Driven forward—— He must neither be forced towards it nor rush at it. He must walk. Walk quietly, spontaneously, without hesitation and without haste. His Father would speak to him and tell him what to do.

Efflam stopped thinking and listened. What was that? Was it He who walked upon the water? Was He coming nearer? Would He speak?

A rhythmic beating was heard in the stillness of the night, unlike the waves and the wind, a sound he had not heard before. It was strong, regular, it increased, but it never became either a roar or a din, it only reverberated broadly and with a strangely safe strength.

"Speak to me, Father," mumbled Efflam, kneeling at his open window. "I feel more courage, for I know now that you are strong. I listen, Father."

He remained at the open window, waiting, while the sound steadily increased. The soft darkness of the summer night still prevailed, but the stars were paling towards the dawn. Yet new ones were lighted. Away in the south-east one great yellow star after the other appeared, all low on the horizon, all on the same level. They moved slowly past the southern bay seawards.

Efflam could deceive himself no longer. It was the Trémur fishing fleet putting out to sea. A wandering town that grew out of the indigo-red gate of the eastern sky and moved through the soft, greyish-white mist in which the sky and sea had become one.

The sound died as slowly as it had come, but Efflam's longing for the indefinable which he had prepared himself to receive increased all the more as the new stars out there died away in the distance and the sound grew fainter and farther away. It was only the fishing fleet going out to sea, but something surely had passed by him. Something was now leaving him and drawing with it his sense of hearing and of sight, straining them to the uttermost until they could not function, and only the more sensitive organs of the soul listened, stretching themselves outwards so as to hold fast

that which had gone. The mirror of the sea was now emerging from the mist like a silent, silver-grey surface, full of solace, but increasing his melancholy.

The sky above Efflam grew lighter, became first of all a clear blue and then still lighter, almost white, but his attention was still riveted to the horizon—growing more and more clear, more and more distant. He did not see the suspicion of light pink in the whitish-blue at the zenith. Weighed down by his loss, his gaze lingered on the dark tongue of blue by the southern horizon. Far in the east the deep indigo had changed to a strong rose-pink—always the same drag downwards, this drawing of his soul outwards——

Efflam started when he heard a raucous, ugly croaking. He knew them well, these black birds who built in the chimney of his own unused stove. They often appeared early in the morning and flew quickly like black shadows past the top of his window. Now he only heard their cries; always twice backwards and forwards as if the bow of a violin had been dragged harshly across the strings, producing an unpleasant sound.

At the same moment a cock crew. It has passed, he thought, passed. This something that approached me has passed. Now he noticed a light breeze—no, it resembled more a movement of the dawn, a trembling, a coldness in the air.

The mirror of the sea was already different and diversified. Farthest out a sugar loaf wave in a dull blue, shading off into brown nearer inland and becoming grey white with a little pink. It was blurred and dirtily bright.

Efflam shivered in his royal purple-blue pyjamas—the ones the Jegous had given him, but he was spellbound and could not leave the window. Now the earth drew him to her. The roofs appeared sharp like stage scenery, although the sun had still only hinted at her arrival. The corn on the half-cut field was a yellow white and shone almost as strongly as the roofs. He saw a large, brown hare, its long upstanding ears alert. It moved without fear in this hour which for animals is the safest of all, the hour before the day has begun. The stubble into which it hopped was white, cold white like snow.

In this summer, which was so unusually dry for rainy Brittany, with a sun as strong as in the south, nature had ripened before its

time and become pale and spiritualised. But Efflam suddenly shivered. The grey-white, smooth, hard silver of the corn and the cold snow of the stubble gave him a feeling of winter and the coldness of death.

"Father, Father, why have you deserted me?" he cried.

There came the black birds back again. Their hard cry, like the sweep of a bow, crix-crax twice over, grated on him, seemed to go through him. The sun must be up by now, but the eastern gate far away over Trémeur, through which the boats with their lanterns had passed and which had been decorated with the strongest splendour of the colours of dawn, had now pulled down over itself a grey-blue blanket, and the early promise had come to naught.

Nevertheless, there were still signs of hope along the horizon. The colours of the rainbow, which generally only appeared away in the west in the hottest noon-day mist, now became visible on this side.

Efflam got up and leant out over the window-sill. At that moment the sun broke through above Tréoultré's big church standing there so like a ship, a red globe pushing its way out of the rainbow's first band of colour, the heavy blue. It shone red in the red, and yellow in the yellow, shining warmly, had in fact grown into a real sun. The sea was as before a gloomy brownish-blue dirtily glistening—a smudged looking-glass.

The days passed clear and sun-warmed. The farmers cut the early, unevenly ripened corn without haste and using their short sickles. Guillaume Garrec and his daughters spent day after day bent low over the earth, gathering and cutting the corn, a handful at a time. The sheafs remained lying on the spiky grating of the grey-white stubble. There was no hurry about stacking them up, one no longer feared the rain that the pasture-lands needed so badly.

Below Efflam's window Madame Blanche had a little flower patch: a row of pinks with leaves just such a dry, hot grey as the sand beneath them and with small, strongly-scented flowers that thrived in the heat. Next to it Madame Le Floch had a little plot of vegetables: leeks and cabbages that stood hesitantly still, lettuces that spread out their green leaves until they reached a certain height and then suddenly withered. Over the wide flank

of the rubbish-heap the flies buzzed, living their summer life. They kept to that which was theirs—to the territory of wandering cats and black jackdaws.

On Saturday Le Floch and the two Goeffry men came home with their booty and ornamented the ugly house with brown butterfly wings: and the fishermen sat down on the ground and repaired the edges of the 'wings'. The stairs smelt of fried sardines and tunny-fish steaks.

The carpenter always took Saturday off and stood outside his workshop, rolled his cigarettes and listened to gossip. The wives of the house also appeared; Blanche looked after her flowers and Adelaide Le Floch loosened the soil round her vegetables. Before coming out they had both changed their clothes, and their soft, light velvet gleamed in the sun. The fluttering bands, as clean as the wings of sea-gulls, and their high coifs often touched the ground when the women bent over their little iron hoes. Madame Goeffry and her sister went off calling. They also had dressed themselves in their Saturday clothes and stepped carefully as they went through the rubbish so as to reach the neighbour's house by the shortest way.

Bearded Monsieur Ludwig was in his window, smoking his pipe and gazing good-naturedly at all that was happening around the house. On the other hand his companion, Sixtus, was working hard and furiously at his easel. Efflam had been asked to come in, and he sat where the artist had placed him against the wall. His shoulders were stiff from keeping so long in the same position, but he nodded sleepily.

Then the door was pushed open and the round-cheeked gendarme came in. He coughed awkwardly and shook hands with the two artists. All three were uncertain and careful in what they said. Efflam alone sat indifferently in his chair behind the big canvas. It was, however, to see him and not the two foreigners that the gendarme had come. He showed a written statement from a higher authority asking for more precise information regarding the person so and so. Efflam went to fetch the papers which had been given him, and meanwhile the gendarme stood there trying to find something he could understand in Sixtus's painting and rough draft. Ludwig offered him a drink, and they drank each other's health and praised the wines of the country.

The gendarme took the opportunity to say, inclining his head towards the other side of the landing:

"What do you think of your neighbour, Messieurs?"

"He's one of the best, quite one of the best," Sixtus hastened to assure him dryly while he sipped his drink and looked at the work on his easel. Efflam's red coat and blue scarf had begun to emerge in loose, clear splashes of colours, whereas the head—or rather the heads, for there seemed to be outlines of several of them—witnessed to the artist's difficulties in transmitting the quality he wished to get on to the canvas. He was very anxious to be allowed to keep his model. The gendarme was sceptical.

"He goes round making speeches, doesn't he? Are they political? Or are they merely religious?"

"Neither. It's poetry," said the giant with the beard.

"Poetry? Lies, isn't it?"

"Where is the border-line, sergeant?"

"Yes, where?"

"We think our Prince a particularly interesting person. To us this district would be a great deal the poorer if he were not here."

"Well, well, yes, perhaps you're right, Messieurs. Well, I must excuse myself for having troubled you and say good-bye. Here comes the Prince with his identity papers. Aha, yes, thank you, they are the same as before. You are due to report yourself at the police station, but as I was passing the house I thought I would come in and save you the journey. Excuse me, gentlemen, excuse me, Prince! *Au revoir*, Messieurs!"

The house awoke to a new Sunday, and new preparations for festival. There was a gay busy-ness both inside and outside the house. The brooms scratched the bare boards more energetically than ever. The scrubbing-brushes whizzed in the hands of the whistling, singing fishermen. Before it was even time to go down to the Kér-laérecs for the morning coffee, Efflam's ceiling shed great big tears smelling of hydrochloric acid as Nonna Goeffry boldly and generously scrubbed the room above. Bolsters were beaten, mats shaken, they sang, scolded the children, cleaned the shoes and spread things out to dry on the window-sills. The men washed in large tubs outside against the wall of the carpenter's shop.

There was a little wind—a dry, hot wind off the land—and the small, white clouds were not scattered about, but, as it were, thinly spread out over the blurred sky. By degrees, however, it cleared and was a hot day again.

Next day the wind had swung round to the west and a strange, milky white mist lay over Tréoultré and Trémeur and over the meadows in the south bay. This heat from the sea was tiring and disquieting. It was stiflingly hot in the workshop. The cross stood dark and mute against the wall.

'Father, how long?' Eflam asked in his thoughts. 'How long am I to wait for your directions?'

People were as if in a fever and easily irritated. Madame Kér-laérec drank a glass too much and was attacked by the laughter that so easily turned into melancholy. The carpenter rubbed his arms and legs and complained of stiffness in his muscles. Eflam also felt his fatigue as a stiffness, a heaviness in his limbs and head. But as soon as his work was finished he went out and suddenly found himself on his way along the railway line. He strode with long steps from sleeper to sleeper, racing the sun so as to reach Saint-Fiacre and the cliffs of Tal-Ifer before it set.

He arrived in time and stood again by the corroded iron railings with the cross in the granite below him. The sun was almost touching the water, and a dark violet, skittle-like shadow lay between it and the coast where Eflam stood. On either side the wave-topped surface was a pure and deep sea-green. The great, calm, mighty, sea-green surface mitigated his fever and eased his agitation.

The red, fiery ball of the sun was now sitting on top of the sea itself, pushing its way down into it, making an impression in its far-away edge. Soon the last spark was extinguished and the surface of the sea with its wandering waves became a whole again and seemed larger than ever. The evening clouds were now visible as they sucked up the colours from the sinking sun. Eflam was already on his way back to his own village.

Marie-Jeanne also suffered from the heavy, disquieting atmosphere. The heat collected in the low room with its one window and one door, both placed in such a way that there was no draught

nor any circulation of air inside the room. As it grew cooler towards evening she went out and soon reached Efflam's house. Most of the inmates there had also gone out to get a breath of air. The Kér-laérecs were nowhere to be seen. Marie-Jeanne went up the stairs, past Efflam's door without daring to knock, and on to the flat above. Now she sat with Yvonne Stéphan at the latter's north-west window which captured the last rays of the evening sun. The asphalt road below the window displayed shining pools where the tar had been softened by the heat. The railways lines flashed when a sunbeam happened to touch them. They lay there as usual, desolate and empty.

The light became more and more unnatural as sunset approached. It was difficult to see to do the fine thread work in this strange, strong light. Therefore she let her hands lie idle and looked out of the window. The sun lay like a golden-red apple on the roof of one of the smaller houses over there. While she watched, it glided away behind one of the chimneys, reappeared and rolled down from the house on to the surface of the water—and the next moment it had disappeared.

Marie-Jeanne sighed. The emptiness out there became an emptiness in herself. Where was he to-night, she wondered. She realised that he was not at home in the house, but where had he gone?

Yvonne disturbed Marie-Jeanne's thoughts by unexpectedly speaking her own: "Adelaide Le Floch would not believe me, but now she's seen it herself—the halo, I mean."

"I haven't seen it," said Marie-Jeanne, sadly, because she could not say the opposite. Suddenly she saw that someone was coming, he was coming. The horizon was no longer desolate. On the contrary. It was as if a rose-bush had grown up out of the sea and had grown quickly, shooting its flowering branches far out to the sides and high up towards the zenith. He himself looked black and indistinct out there in the light, in the midst of the glow of the roses—like a piece of charred wood. Like those charred logs that had drifted ashore, the remains of burnt-out ships.

Marie-Jeanne stopped herself, frightened. Why did her thoughts run along such lines? Burnt-out ships, charred pieces of wood—for he who was approaching was a person, a living man. She

could distinguish him properly now, she could hear his steps, see his clothes, see his cheeks and chin, dark with bristles—all dark because he still had the light behind him. His forehead also was shadowed. Only over the hair lay the warm sheen of the evening glow behind him.

"Oh!" the widow burst out breathlessly. "There it is again, the halo round his head. Did you see it?" She remained sitting idly with her work held in her tightly-clasped hands—a little brown ball of hands, which she pressed hard into her lap. Her face, generally so sour-looking, was warm with emotion. Marie-Jeanne felt both jealous annoyance and a strange distaste.

Her strained ears now heard Efflam's step on the stairs; the door of his room opened.

"I scrub his room every Saturday," said Yvonne.

"Do you?" said Marie-Jeanne. Only then did she become fully conscious of what the other had said, and of what she had answered. Jealousy began to plague her again. She pushed back her chair, wound up her thread, and settled her crochet hook behind her ear. Without another word she left Madame Stéphan, who did not seem to find it at all strange that farewell words had not been spoken. She remained sitting as before, looking absent-mindedly through the window, while something in her listened to the hopping steps as they went down the stairs. When they stopped, she drew her dark eyebrows together into one short, bushy line. Then the steps were heard again, now far down the first flight of stairs, and the line became two calm arches again.

Well out on the road, Marie-Jeanne bent her neck and looked up at the attic window. Two coal-black eyes met hers in a searching glance.

"It will be light for long to-night. The moon's in the first quarter and is shining clear," said Marie-Jeanne to herself. "Blanche and Gérard haven't come back yet. The shutters of the other room are also closed. Prince Efflam and you are the only two people in the house."

She tortured herself with the words, but the face that she turned upwards shone clearer and clearer. The other's face, on the other hand, darkened. She listened intently and heard the faint breathing of her sleeping children. Then she listened more consciously with strained attention, as if she wished to project herself into her

neighbour's room on the floor below by means of this conscious listening.

The landlord, Drezen, came out himself to dig his potatoes. In spite of his powerful body, he seemed almost transparent in his greyness. He often raised himself up and, using the blade of his spade as a support for his shorter leg and resting his hand on the wooden handle, he would stand gazing out across his field, both at his tenement house and at the village. Something authoritative would come over him. He resembled the grey shadow of one of the old emperors who, having half-risen out of the earth, was gazing possessively at all that was upon it. The potatoes lay spread out on the ground like shining golden ducats. Far behind him wavered the long wisps of smoke from the seaweed burning on the beach. The crackling, dry seaweed was piled up in stacks as high as any megalith, but it decreased as quickly as the smoke increased, and its evil smell spread through the neighbourhood.

Hot day followed hot day. In a strange way time stood still. Efflam waited, waited——

In this strong heat the sun appeared faintly in the midst of the heat haze. There were rumours of devastating fires in other parts of the country, of desolated forests and great misfortunes. Here by the coast the sea hummed lazily and indifferently. The people also rested: they heard about the misfortunes, they saw that the pasture-lands were brown and burnt, and that the fruit was shrivelling, but the sun, the stillness, the heat produced a blessed apathy.

The full moon produced restlessness and variation in the atmosphere, but the wind only brought a stronger heat from inland. The sea rose with a thunder that was carried across the meadows. There were breakers even in the quiet south bay, where small, innocent sand-drifts were formed, over which the waves broke. The children played down by the sea. They took off their clothes and lay in the sea, splashing.

In his free time Efflam went down to the beach, watched the children and prayed to St. Anne. The grown-ups wondered at first whether he was mumbling threats, but when they saw his expression and met the mildness in his eyes they grew calm and entrusted the little ones to him. The only tourists in the village,

the two painters, also spent their time down on the beach. They had long since begun to walk there like other long-legged wading birds, dressed only in their bathing-drawers, and from time to time they would swim, snorting, through the waves.

The great heat produced heat-fever and sleepless nights. Efflam watched the coming of the night through his high, open window. The moon was still large when, shortly after sunset, it would appear over the south bay. Only a star was visible in the clear night light, the evening star, which alone with the moon rose into the heavens.

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE BROWN, yellow patches of grass in the beach meadows continued to spread. Like so many others, Guillaume Garrec led his cow there every morning and tethered her where the grass was least burnt. He hung his head as he walked, and the cow's back vertebræ and thigh-bones stood out sharply, its ribs were strongly marked and its udders as they swayed shrivelled and flabby. No new grass was growing on the mown fields and the stubble resembled more and more a hard, white grating of nails. The full moon had not brought the alteration in the weather which had been hoped for, it had brought nothing but a kind of unsteadiness. The thunder began to roll in the distance.

Away over Tréoultré a low, blue-white light flickered, making church towers and roofs stand out in silhouette. Guillaume used to go out at night, right out into the street, to see whether the storm was coming any nearer. But the pale streaks of light never became real lightning, only the lighthouse shot out its long hovering fingers of light, always touching the same houses and little streets. Guillaume went back into the house resigned, back into his hot room in which the grandchildren slept heavily, but restlessly, with their hair clammy with sweat. The grandfather bent carefully over them, lifted Birgitte's long, bare legs in under the blanket, straightened Loulou's little body which lay right across the bed. Then he stole carefully round his daughter's bed—the heat had forced Lucie to put her mattress and bedding on to the floor. Marie-Suzette groaned sleepily in the bed in the corner.

"Is it beginning?" she asked. "I thought I heard a rumble."

"No," said Guillaume, "it was only Rose upstairs banging her shutter. The thunder-clouds have divided and gone out to sea. Our Lord is trying us very hard."

"Oh, yes, yes! If only Prince Efflam—— If only we could get Efflam to pray for rain!"

"Prince Efflam thinks more of the salvation of our souls than of pasture for our cows. But if only he would—that would indeed be a great, great miracle!"

Caroline had not been able to refrain from going towards Trémear once more. She came back along the beach, wheeling her bicycle over the firm sand-belt nearest the sea. Then she turned upward and dragged it, panting, through the more troublesome loose sand higher up. Smoke, smelling strongly of sardines and the hot oil, belched out of the chimney of the preserving factory. Caroline looked over the wall at the racks on which the sardines were put out to dry in the open air after they had been washed. The little fishes arranged in careful rows were as stiff and shining as if they had been cut out of tin-foil.

Her late companions came and went between the big factory door and the drying place, carrying dripping wire-mesh trays of fish. Caroline's eyes filled with tears. She knew she had behaved so badly that she could no longer go to the factory—or only now and again if so much fish was brought in that extra hands were needed. She did not long to go back, but she did not like to feel that the door was closed against her. It was also a long time since she had been able to buy anything new, and now she had hardly enough money to get her shoes repaired—the ones without toes or heels that she kept for festival day.

Higher up in the village, where the first cross-road began, she met Hugo Lescantin with his father. They were carrying prawn-ing-nets over their shoulders. The older man nodded to her and at the same moment for comfort's sake let his chin drop, turning it to one side, so that he might the more easily free himself of a gob of saliva. Hugo's eyelids trembled lightly and irritatingly, and Caroline showed the red tip of her tongue. Then she jumped on to her bicycle, lifted the short, wide skirt over the saddle and went off.

She had not gone far before she was obliged to dismount because the exit to the main street was blocked. Some of the fishermen were unloading their handcarts outside fish-dealer Lazare's shop. Lazare's own lorry, however, was the chief obstacle. The man himself stood inside the shop, supervising the weighing, while the fishermen struggled with the heavy boxes of cod and hake, and threw down flounders and ray-fish as big as tables, together with sea-eels as long as a man. Caroline looked round impatiently for a way through. At that very moment Lazare himself became aware of her. He was new to the district, but not quite unknown. He left his weighing-machine and came to the door:

"Does mademoiselle want to get past?"

"What do you think I'm standing here for if I don't?" asked the girl impertinently, but she did not hesitate to give him a glance which was answered in a different way from anything she had expected.

Lazare came out, took her bicycle and in a hand's turn had whipped it on to his lorry. Caroline opened her eyes wide, but this time from innocent surprise at the comical man with his turned-up nose, who in his light clothing looked more insolent than slovenly. The belt hung loose and low on his stomach, and he kept pulling at it and at the same time jerking his legs, although his trousers never seemed to get any higher up. His shirt was loose and wide open at the neck, but his chest could not be called naked as it was covered with a forest of black, curly hair.

"What are you doing with my bicycle?" asked Caroline.

The fish-dealer only winked at her and turned to carry on with his business. He and the fishermen parted company, and he now turned his back altogether on the girl and fastened the double gate. Caroline could have got by now, as the handcarts were no longer there, if only he had not taken the bicycle. Lazare put two fingers to his mouth and whistled, and the next moment Caroline was almost knocked down by a big wolf-hound who came rushing from the back of the house, jumped up and clambered over the boxes and bicycle until he reached the roof of the driving-cabin.

Caroline gave the leering owner a disdainful look, but her superiority was not genuine. She had often had to hasten to the edge of the road to get out of the way of this reckless driver with his wolf-hound on the roof of his car. She had often heard his

loud laugh. He had also made advances to her once or twice, and she had always distrusted him. Her companions at the factory had said that he was married already, but she did not believe this as he always behaved as if he were free and unattached. Now he threw out his hand in a chivalrous gesture.

"Would Mademoiselle fancy a little round trip to Kerscaven, Pont l'Abbé, Trémeur and back again? You've had many happy hours in those districts. Where were you most happy? Was it in Trémeur?"

"Be quiet!"

"Well, well, little girl! Don't look at me so proudly. You were not so stand-offish that Sunday in Kerscaven, although I was not allowed to go with you as far as was someone else. By the way, I saw him later in Trémeur—but outside the village. Yes, one gets hold of a thing or two when one has a lorry like this——" He gave the lorry one or two loving pats, and the dog beat his tail energetically on the roof. Then the man went up close to Caroline. "There's no reason why you should rush round to the ports looking for him. He's far away over the seven seas by now. And you don't even know his name, ha ha!"

"Shut up!" said the girl and tried to protect herself from the exhalations from his body, from that perspiring, hairy chest which he pushed out towards her while he fumbled with his belt as before. She herself felt the perspiration tickling her skin, and it was not only disgust that caused her to perspire.

"Shut up and go away! Give me my bicycle. I want my bicycle."

"Take it!"

She stood on tiptoe and stretched out her arms, hoping to pull it towards her. The dog's angry eyes and opened mouth terrified her. Lazare laughed and pulled his belt so tight that the trousers at last came up—almost to the armpits. Challengingly and scornfully he pushed out his stomach once more towards the girl and then sauntered off towards the lorry door.

"My bicycle!" shouted Caroline, forgetting everything in her anxiety. The lorry was already shaking with the revved-up engine.

"My cycle, my cycle," she shouted, beside herself. The impertinent, snub-nosed face was once more turned towards her, leering at her.

"Just let me borrow it for a short time. I'll bring it back to you this evening. No! On the fourteenth after dark—behind the factory over there."

The face was drawn back, the lorry dashed out of the side street, turned and disappeared. Caroline still saw for a moment the big wolf-hound and her pretty red and blue and chromium bicycle. Then it disappeared into the distance.

"Why are you so silent and depressed?" Marie Le Donche asked her younger daughter at the four o'clock meal.

"I don't feel well," answered Caroline.

"Not well—again! What's the matter with you, girl? We must ask Dr. Guilcher to have a look at you. Are you going out again? You're not well, you say, but you rush about like I don't know what."

"I'm not going far," answered the girl sulkily. "I haven't got my bicycle—it's being repaired."

She stopped at the wall where Marie-Jeanne was sitting with her crochet. 'I will, I won't—I will, I won't,' she thought as she stood there, scraping the moss from the stones. Should she confide in her sister? Tell her all, all just as it was? No, she decided suddenly, glancing at her crippled sister. What did she know about the sort of thing that Caroline herself had met and experienced? The younger girl again felt her superiority over the elder and hardened her heart.

"Why are you scratching away at the stones in that way?" asked Marie-Jeanne. "You'll tear your nails to pieces."

"What does that matter, they're my nails. What does your Prince Efflam do in the evenings?"

Marie-Jeanne looked at her sister, surprised. Then she sank back into her own thoughts. What did he do? The evening before he had come wandering home along the railway line, and shutting the door behind him had been alone in the house with Madame Stéphan and her sleeping children. What was he doing and where was he this evening?

"I don't know where Efflam is in the evenings, at any rate not all the evenings," she answered at last.

"No, you know nothing about anything. How do you know that he doesn't go to bed with Yvonne Stéphan?"

Marie-Jeanne turned an expressionless face towards her sister, and the latter's scorn slowly disappeared before something that she read in her sister's eyes.

"I was only joking," she said, ashamed, and then began to apply herself to her own problems. She would keep the matter to herself—he was so impudent, so above himself, that tiresome fish-dealer. He spied and gossiped. But she must get her bicycle back whatever it cost her— She was not afraid. She was experienced. She could look after herself.

The fourteenth, behind the factory after dark. That was the day after to-morrow. There were sure to be a good many people about that evening, for there was a dance at the café down in the harbour

On the fourteenth of July the sky was grey but there was only a little rain, and when Adelaide Le Floch went out and touched her cabbage leaves she found that the earth under them was as dry as ever.

"Look," she said to Kér-laérec, "we might as well have none at all. The crops will fail, everything will be expensive and we shall have a famine in the country."

"Yes," agreed the carpenter. "Even the sardines are very scarce. The tunny-fish is no better than the mackerel was. It is as if the sea is beginning to empty."

"And yet we have a man of God among us. But the great miracle does not seem to happen. We have a little rain but not the real deluge that we need. Why is nothing happening?" asked the woman.

Kér-laérec stood with half-closed eyes and delighted in feeling the warm, light drizzle against his face. His sensitive knees and thin legs trembled with eagerness and nervousness, but some time passed before he answered. He saw their landlord, Drezen, coming along, walking in his strange way, jerking the upper part of his body with his long strides. In the rainy mist and from between half-closed eyes he could almost be taken for a gigantic sea-horse. Now he stopped for a moment and looked at his land and then seemed to throw himself down almost flat on it, tossing up the earth as with a mattock. Those who stood by the house could see how chalky and dead it was as he threw it up. The

potatoes he dug up were also dry and clean, and lay there shining like hen's eggs and about the same size. They had never fully developed.

"No, it does not seem to happen," the carpenter said finally. "Monsieur Drezen is going on digging his potatoes. He is not expecting rain. And yet—I think there is something in the air!"

He went back into the workshop, where Efflam was working.

The national holiday passed without any particular celebrations. The parish council saw to it that wreaths were laid on the peace monuments beside the church in Tréoultré, but the procession was small and the singing and preaching were dull and of no importance. The years had by degrees become full of peace and liberation days, although it did not seem as if there was any real peace in the world. Those who had wireless sets turned them on and listened to the celebrations in the towns, and in the evening there was a dance in the big café down by the harbour.

Efflam went for his evening walk and looked at the dancing couples in the café hall as they rocked past the windows. In the shadow by the wall opposite him stood two little figures, each with a hand closed round her shawl. They were, however, not standing still, for they lifted themselves eagerly on tiptoe, stretching out their necks to look through the windows. It was Marie-Jeanne and another young girl with a humpback.

"Good-evening, Marie-Jeanne. Good-evening, Mademoiselle," he said.

"Good-evening, Efflam. Have you seen Caroline?" There was anxiety in Marie-Jeanne's voice, and he stopped.

"Why? Are you anxious about your sister?"

"She's not in there dancing, nor can she be out with Hugo Lescantin, for he's at sea. And her cycle is being repaired. Help her, Efflam! Look after her!"

He smiled, his hand describing a sort of half-circle in a blessing over the two girls, and went on towards the harbour.

'Help her, Efflam, watch over her,' he thought as he strode along the half-dark quay. Tide was going out, and the boats drawn up on the beach grew higher and higher as they lay between their struts. Dead fish and the entrails of those that had been split open earlier in the evening lay stinking on the dry sand. 'Help her, help her.'

He went upwards, but stopped again and saw anxiously how gloomy St. Anne's beach looked as it lay there with the dark waves rolling up it. He saw something moving there. A man was climbing over the many obstacles, both fixed and loose, which lay below the factory wall. The man was dragging something with him. Then he disappeared behind a boat, which with its up-turned keel could be dimly seen in the darkness.

Efflam left the harbour and wandered round the village, but the short, dark alley-ways brought him back to the shore, in the neighbourhood of the factory. The factory watchdog barked and shook his long chain, but it was not at Efflam that he was growling so angrily. He scented another, strange smell, the smell of a man who was creeping up from the beach the back way, along the wall of the factory, and who stood there, lurking round the corner. The dog also scented Caroline as she carefully approached and hastily slipped into the nearest little garden, from which she in her turn could be on the look-out. Thanks to the dog's barking, neither of them heard Efflam's approach.

'Watch over my sister'—what could he do in his earthly poverty when he could not even see through the circumstances, could not even guess at what was the matter? The fire had died in him, his feelings were weak, he was not even given light. Slowly he went through the little lane towards the main street. Behind him the dog rattled its chain and barked as before.

Caroline unexpectedly trod on something that crackled under her feet, and the man round the corner saw her. He stepped forward with his hands in his pockets, jerked his head carelessly commanding her to come out on to the road to him. She did not move, but looked at him across the wall, scornful and unafraid.

"Where is my bicycle?"

"Take it easy! First of all we must have a friendly chat about it all. As a matter of fact, I've spent a tidy little sum on your bicycle and been very considerate and kind towards it. I'm sure to get it back, I said to myself. I've put a new valve in the front wheel tube, and its been straightened and cleaned up."

"No one asked you to do anything of the sort. Give me the cycle."

"Why is Mademoiselle so unfriendly? I think we'll let the matter rest for a couple of days. Shall we say until Sunday, same

time as to-day, just after dark? But in a quieter place. Say, for instance, Tréoultré, behind the football field."

"You're a fool, and a thief. I won't be at your beck and call. I shall report you to the police."

"Oh no, you'll do nothing of the sort, Mademoiselle," laughed Lazare. "Like everybody else the police are very interested in little stories. I know lots of little stories, among others the story of a certain young lady who enjoyed herself very much over there at Kerscaven, and who went on enjoying herself—especially over in the neighbourhood of Trémeur, in the old picturesque windmill. Mademoiselle knows where I mean. Yes, I happened to stop my lorry in the neighbourhood and my dog is good at picking up a scent. I collect little stories of that sort, and people down there in the harbour and in the cafés are only too anxious to hear them. But, but—one wants an experience oneself—not to be only a looker-on."

"Shut up, you swine!"

"What language from a little convent miss! Listen now, I also know a certain sailor, his right name and the name of his ship. But that is an expensive secret, one that I would not give away for nothing. But let's leave all that and be sociable. Let's walk along the shore and enjoy each other's company. I'll show you my little pavilion, one of those little concrete affairs that were built during the war. It can be used for many things. Come along now, the moon will be up very shortly—it's only a step from here, and then one more. There's nothing to be afraid of. Look at me—feel me, I'm something to get hold of. There, there! Now you're beginning to behave like a grown-up girl."

Caroline moved step by step towards him until she was so close that he drew one of his hands out of his pocket and put his arm round her waist. She shivered but did not pull away.

"You're a swine, a rat, I'm going to murder you," she whispered as she followed him towards the sea.

He laughed contentedly, close to her ear, and she felt a sprinkle of saliva on her cheek. "You shall have everything you want afterwards. Now we'll walk along quietly and pleasantly, just like a newly-engaged couple."

Efflam came back into the alley-way. Why was the dog quiet now? The silence made him anxious, and he began to pray eagerly:

"Father, Father! Why do people live in sin and darkness and I who should watch over them like the lighthouse over this coastal district am fumbling and inexperienced? My time is not yet come, but, Father, give me a gleam of the heavenly light which once was mine. O Father! O St. Anne——"

With his hands clasped in front of him he wandered away from the village and out on to the shore itself. He swayed so as to keep his balance, for his arms were still bound by his strongly clasped fingers. He nearly tripped over the rushes, which in one place grew in large, bush-like bundles, stiff and blackish-brown. Unexpected holes full of loose sand sometimes brought him down on to his knees, but he got up again and walked on. In this way he reached the low dune and stood still on the top of it. The beams of the lighthouse appeared regularly, but moved so quickly that the part of the shore they illuminated stood out only as faint slices of broken landscape. The moon began to show above the rocky reefs. It was a sickly reddish yellow, as it pushed its way out of the clouds, and it took on several different shapes before it settled down to be the waning moon it was. Efflam loosened his tightly interlaced fingers, and the cramp-like stiffness left his muscles. Relaxed and freed, he stretched out his arms towards the shore beneath. He prayed again, but now with self-liberating abandonment. He became one with the wind that shook the dry dune grass and carried the loose, rustling blades of seaweed across the belt of sand. The rhythm of the advancing and retreating waves as they surged forward and tumbled back passed into him. Upon the shore they flowed out in broad, scum-covered borders, shining whiter and whiter in the light of the rising moon.

"O St. Anne, I feel you are near me," he sighed, thankful and happy. "You are here, you are here!"

In spite of everything, Lazare was not very used to dark, uneven beaches. The distance also was very much farther than he had reckoned, and it took a long time to reach the place to which he meant to take Caroline. He swore.

"It ought to be here, my little pavilion. Of course, I've been

here before, but I came from the Trémur side. No, don't giggle, my little mademoiselle. I only used it for a dressing-room one Sunday when I bathed. Even then the thought occurred to me——"

"Let go of me," begged Caroline. "I don't want to go any farther with you. Oh, don't squeeze me so hard. You needn't hurt me, at any rate. Let me go. Fetch the bicycle for me—— You'll never find this place again. So what's the good of going on!"

"Never find the place! Mademoiselle is impatient, eager—— Ha, ha! Look, you show me the way! You know this coast."

Lazare broke off and pointed to the thick concrete blockhouse which he had now come upon quite unexpectedly. It stood there greyish-white in the moon's light under some overhanging tufts of long shore grass which moved in the wind. For the first time the girl was terror-stricken. Unexpectedly she tore herself free from him and ran right down towards the water's edge. Lazare swore and ran after her, but slipped on the slimy stones and fell flat. Clumsy and swearing, he got up. Caroline stood half-turned towards the land as if she did not know what she should do next, the waves washing right over her shoes.

"Oh, indeed! You're just a hysterical child," mocked the fish-merchant, who was afraid to move in the dangerous region down by the water's edge where everything was dripping wet and full of holes from which the sea had only just withdrawn itself. He pretended to be quite at ease and returned to his habit of dragging and pulling at his trouser belt as he pranced about.

"A hysterical child who cannot even keep her promise."

"My promise—I've never promised you anything," she said with a sob. It was terrible standing here at the water's edge, feeling as if the sea were catching hold of her at the same time as it churned up the sand under her feet, making it into a loose, thin mass.

"You came with me, and that was the same as a promise. Haven't you winked at me many a time as I drove past you? Look now, I'll go in front and see if our little nest is in order."

He made as if to go towards the concrete blockhouse. He went slowly, waiting between each step. Caroline stared with mixed feelings at him and forgot to move her feet. She only noticed this

when she had sunk down to her ankles in the sand. Lazare waved lightly with a lazy hand:

"Come as soon as you've made up your mind—voluntarily, you understand—I don't force anybody—I only wait."

Caroline felt how the sand was sliding away from under her. She looked at the gloomy sea, at the poisonous yellow, crooked moon, at the fish-merchant. From behind he did not look particularly dangerous. Insolent and ugly he was, but——

He heard her come running after him and sucked in the air between his lips contentedly in a half-whistle.

"There, there," he said, and put his arm round her.

Just as they bent down to go in, Efflam stood in front of them, as if descended from heaven, stood blocking the entrance with his outstretched arms. The moonlight fell clearly upon him, on his face and in his brown eyes reflecting gleams like those that shone on the wet stones.

Again the air whistled through Lazare's teeth, this time in an oath. Caroline's eyes were larger and rounder than ever before, and they slowly filled with a light that made them shine clearer and clearer. The fish-merchant lifted his hand to strike, but suddenly a thought occurred to him, and he no longer took the matter so seriously. He stretched out his neck towards the opening.

"So there are other people who use this little pavilion. Is anyone in there?"

"The angel of the Lord. The same who once moved the stone from my grave."

"He's crazy——" began Lazare, but the expression on Efflam's face stopped him. He looked away and spat nervously. Caroline's eyes grew larger and larger, clearer and clearer. She bent farther and farther forward in her dripping shoes.

"Why, yes!" she said in a long, happy whisper. She saw something shining inside there. Something white as snow, glittering as if with diamonds. Suddenly she fell on her knees, clutching hold of Efflam.

"I'm a sinner. Make me different!"

"St. Anne will protect you. She'll intercede for you."

"Then I'll give her something. Offer up something—I'll—— I'll give her my bicycle!"

Lazare stood there grinding his teeth. He saw nothing inside there except a little ghostly moonlight. The rough back-wall seemed to be grinning maliciously. The shadows fell in such a way that they made him think of the skull of a sheep which the dog had brought to him the other day. The place was empty. It was not as he had thought at first. This madman was not engaged on an adventure of any sort. He hadn't guts enough for that. But now—now was not a little love scene being played under his very eyes? And had she not given away her bicycle without as much as turning a hair. He pulled hard at his belt and began in a thick voice:

"And now—if this little *tête-à-tête* and foot-to-foot affair is over, I—I should like to be allowed to pass. Monsieur, I'm waiting for you to lift your wings and set your beak in another direction. It is my turn to use this little abode of angels, this grave."

Efflam stepped aside immediately, holding Caroline's hand.

"Go into your grave!" he said sombrely. Although perplexed and restrained, the man was still unabashed, and he pushed his head and shoulders through the hole to see whether the place was really empty. At the same moment he suddenly feared that Caroline would steal away with the madman, and so he quickly pulled his head back out of the hole—that is to say, he tried to pull it back, but in his eagerness he knocked against something, receiving a violent blow on his head. After that he knew no more.

Caroline went away with Efflam. She took it as a matter of course that the fish-merchant would follow them, but this did not worry her. Just as she no longer troubled about her bicycle. It belonged to St. Anne, and the saint would see to it herself that she got it when the time was ripe. She walked shyly by Efflam's side, full of a great happiness. The waves no longer growled like angry dogs, they sang. The white, ghostly moonlight looked to her like white flowers in a garden. The lighthouse stretched out its protecting arms over the village.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE SMOKE POURED out from the seaweed bonfires on the sea-shore. The Lescantins, husband and wife, were working calmly,

and without exchanging many words, at one of the bonfires. The wife dreamily raked together the seaweed that was spread around, and her husband in slow movements laid more seaweed on the fire and tended that which lay there already so as to keep alive the smouldering, strongly smoking fire. Underneath the fire on the stone hearth which had been built into the ground a lava-like mass had collected, which when it had cooled would become the grey block as hard as iron in which were imprisoned the precious elements of under-water vegetation. The morning breeze whirled the smoke and threw it in unexpected directions, and Jehan's copper-red, strained and wrinkled face grew more and more sooty. His mind was, however, at peace, but deeply thoughtful. His thoughts formed themselves into prayers. Ever since he had met Efflam in the corn-field he had been like a child again and able to pray and believe. Pray and believe, yes—for prayer was the most important thing, he had learnt that. Even the prayer of a doubter, especially prayers for others, could give answers that strengthened faith.

Lescantin still had anxieties. He was not sure that Our Lord looked on him in mercy. He had been a troublesome sinner. Doubtless it was easier for an ordinary malefactor, a thief, a murderer, to obtain forgiveness. Lescantin's special sins were mockery and scorn—real blasphemies. It now wanted exactly a month to the great *Pardon*, and now he had both the will and the courage to take part in the procession. But he was not sure whether he ought to do so. Had he not forfeited his right? Waited too long to fulfil his promise to Our Lady of Joy? In confession he received counsel and encouragement to join the *Pardon*, but he could not refrain from examining his mind again and again and listening to the voice of conscience.

There were, however, so many voices within him, they squabbled and wrangled like small demons. He needed direction from the outside—there was no doubt about it.

A new cloud of smoke was blown towards Lescantin, and his face became suddenly a bundle of wrinkles as hard as ropes. He was so accustomed to this sort of thing that he was not disturbed in his train of thought.

"My God, I no longer doubt that you exist, but I doubt whether I myself am of use any longer. Is it presumptuous of me to walk

in the procession, or may I do so? Shall I do so? Dear Lord, if only You would give me a sign. If only You would let me see a miracle."

The hard wrinkles on his face smoothed out by degrees. His feelings were loosened up within him and became less cramp-like. Lescantin went from one side of his fire-trough to the other and carefully lifted the red, glowing bands of seaweed. He suddenly noticed that the smoke no longer troubled him, whether he moved or stood still. He lifted his blackened face and looked up. It was going straight up like a grey pillar, straight up towards the blue of the midday sky. It was very seldom that a thing like that happened, for however calm there was almost always a breeze and a draught where sea and land met. Lescantin felt attuned as if to a festival.

He no longer prayed, he only felt, lived, existed. A child in the hands of a merciful, blessing Creator. A son on whom his father's eye rested with pleasure. An Abel from whose fire the smoke rose straight to heaven. He had a premonition that this sign from above was not the last of the great events of this day. The powers of heaven were near at hand.

There were children playing on the sea-shore. Their voices were heard in the distance. A dog barked, the sound blending in with the children's voices. Suddenly Lescantin noticed that it was no ordinary barking. It was urgent, anxious. It sank to a growl, then the dog howled. The sound was wild, almost human.

Jehan Lescantin saw his wife stand still with her rake and look towards the sea-shore. He himself threw a glance in that direction and saw people running towards a certain place, running importantly, as if something had happened. His wife said:

"Something has happened down there. I can see Tanneau and several others creeping into that blockhouse." And she added: "How strangely that wolfhound is behaving."

Her husband thought so too. Such strangely fussy and anxious whining and howling from a dumb animal! He was just about to lay aside his pitchfork when Tanneau appeared, put his hands to his mouth and shouted:

"Ahoy, Jehan! Come and help us!"

Jehan half-ran with his stiff legs. His wife followed him. The

dog met the fisherman as the latter in his haste slipped down the loose sand at the edge of the dune, barked, banged his big, strong tail, took huge leaps, small side-leaps, and then rushed back to the crowd assembled in front of the concrete hut.

Lescantin pushed his way through the crowd. His friend, Tanneau, pushed them aside so that they should not prevent the light entering the hut. Now Jehan saw what was the matter: a man lay in there as if he had fallen forward with his face in the sand. The fisherman bent down and tried to lift the man's head so as to see who he was, but his neck was as immovable as that of a wooden doll. Jehan's hands became sticky with congealing blood.

"His head is bloody," he said.

"Who is he?" was asked.

"Is he dead?"

"Bring him out into the light and warmth!"

"Yes, let's carry him out," said Tanneau, and he and Lescantin, crouching down, lifted the body out and laid it on its back. The wolfhound now began jumping in small leaps round the man's legs. Then he sat on his tail beside the stretched out body and howled mournfully, more and more mournfully, while he stuck his nose straight up into the air.

"It's his dog," said one of those standing by.

"The dog found him. He, the dog, has been running round and round the sea-shore for a long time, backwards and forwards, scenting the air and behaving in a most strange way."

"It's the new fish-merchant."

"He's dead."

"Yes, it's all over with him. The dog knows that too. May his soul rest in peace!"

"He must have been dead a long time, his body is cold and stiff."

"But he has been lying inside in the shade and the cold. Perhaps we ought to take him to the doctor."

"But if he's dead he ought not to be moved until the police have seen him."

A woman's voice suddenly broke in above the others. She had just come from one of the bonfires farther away.

"Is he dead?" she cried. "Is my brother-in-law dead? Yes,

he is my brother-in-law. How will his poor wife take this? She has just had her third child and is still weak. He has never been really kind to her, but he has earned plenty of money and looked after the family."

"What a sorrow, what a sorrow, for the children to lose their father!" sighed the gentle Madame Tanneau, laying her arm sympathetically round the agitated woman's neck.

The men consulted as to what should be done next. Most of them thought that the fish-merchant was dead and that there was no harm in letting him lie where he was until the police and the doctor had come. They sent a messenger to the nearest members of his family—he lived in a village farther inland. The men dried their faces, a little confused, and one of the women burst out hysterically:

"Carry him into the shade! He'll soon begin to stink if you leave him out there in the sun!"

Even about this there was a little discussion: was he so far gone as all that?

"Even if we notice nothing yet, we shall pretty soon in this heat," said somebody.

"Look, the flies are collecting on him already!"

"Carry him into the shade!" said a decisive voice.

"But if he's still alive——" said another more hesitantly.

"Well, lying exposed to the glare of the sun cannot be good, not after he's been in the cold for God knows how long. If we do nothing else, let's cover him over with something."

"There's that foreigner coming. He's almost as good as a doctor. He bound up the sore on Nouna Goeffry's knee and has always medicines to give out. Ask him."

They called Ludwig and Sixtus, who were slouching along with their wet bathing-pants in their hands. Before they had had time to turn off from the road a warning voice whispered:

"Hush! Don't call them both, only the fat one with the beard, Monsieur Ludwig. He's a friendly man. The other one has evil eyes."

Ludwig came and bent down obligingly and made his examination. One of the women found a little looking-glass in her pocket and handed it to him. Finally he straightened himself and stood silent for a long time. His eyes went to the howling, wailing wolf-

hound. All waited for his pronouncement. It came eventually:

"I'm no doctor——"

"Oh yes, yes!" several eager voices interrupted him.

"No, I'm no doctor, but——"

"Oh, Monsieur is almost a doctor. As good as a doctor. What do you think, Monsieur?"

"I think he's dead. When I was in the army I was in the Medical Corps and looked after people who had been killed, and I have seen many dead people."

"Had we not better move him into the shade until the police come?"

"Into the shade? Into the hut? Yes, why not? It's unpleasant to see the flies creeping over him."

While the people turned their backs and the dead man was carefully carried back into the fort, a solitary person was seen far away in the meadows. Madame Blanche had heard that a tunny-fish boat had come in, and she had sent Efflam to the harbour to buy fish. When they came out again from the concrete fort, the men saw him as he walked along the path with a white enamel dish under his arm, crossing the fields towards the factory and the harbour.

There was a noticeable silence. Everybody was waiting for the police and for Dr. Guilcher. Now some of them thought that it was odd that they had forgotten there was such a man as Efflam Kelou in the village. He seemed to belong wherever anything strange happened. The silence grew longer. It was as if the crowd by means of their silence and the power of their gaze had compelled him to change his direction. He no longer went towards the harbour, but was coming towards them.

Monsieur Ludwig had settled himself down a little apart, away from the fort. He wanted to wait for the authorities, to hear what they had to say. His friend took a drawing-block out of his haversack and began to work. The mothers looked disapprovingly at him when they saw how his pencil and hand followed the movements of their little ones as they ran about as good as naked.

Efflam was still a few steps away from the group when Madame Tanneau separated herself from the others and came towards him.

"*Monsieur le Prince*, a terrible misfortune has taken place. Three little children have lost their bread-winner. The youngest is still only a few months old. Help us—I mean, if you only——"

The unknown sister-in-law, who was not acquainted with Efflam but who had heard rumours about him, dared to take a step forward and stood prayerfully with swimming eyes, wringing her hands. Madame Lescantin also approached and spoke strongly and pityingly.

"Whatever may have happened, whether men have done a deed of violence or whether an illness has struck him down, he was anything but ready to go into eternity. *Monsieur le Prince*, if you could only do something."

Efflam threaded his way through the group. Without a word he went down the sandy slope and bent down in front of the opening to the concrete hut. They all followed his movements in silent expectancy. They saw his neck, his back with the short, skimpy workman's blouse with its patches on the elbows. He held the enamel dish with its chipped edges under his left arm.

"Lazare, come out!" shouted Efflam, and after a time he called again: "Lazare, get up and come out!"

Then for the third time: "Lazare, I command you! Get up and come out!"

Far away the breakers boiled, the sea-gulls shrieked round the breakwaters in the harbour. High over the fields bubbled the songs of the larks. The cars on the main road hummed and hooted faintly, the beat of the motors on far-away ships could be discerned. All the sounds that are usually drowned in the near-by hum and in current chatter now, at this very moment, wrote their faint, but particular, sound-writing on the diaphanous leaves of the day. So silent it was round the hut.

Wait a minute—not now. A faint shuffle was heard, as if someone was moving, and a light grinding as of sand under somebody's foot. The blood in the veins of those who were waiting in silence turned to ice. They were filled with terror right out to the very tips of their fingers. Death itself stood there gazing at them.

Or was it not death that in the shape of a man stood at the entrance to the blockhouse, looking at those in front of him in a bewildered way? A minute ago he had been stiff and cold, a piece of flesh on which the flies were already feasting. In the

hearts of those present rose an urgent desire to defend themselves and turn aside from this unnatural happening.

Another sound was now heard, a light, but energetic, thumping sound. It was the wolfhound, who had been lying near the entrance and who now beat with his tail, throwing up the sand in small, hard showers. He still kept his long, narrow nose sadly pressed down between his forepaws, but his ears were wide awake, and then in a moment the big, buoyant animal body had left its place; when those who were standing nearest had recovered from the shower of small stones which were hurled against them, they saw the dog standing with his forepaws on Lazare's shoulders. The latter lifted his hand, both to defend himself and answer the dog's expression of delight. It came to nothing but a weak fumbling. He staggered under the dog's weight and took a tottering step forward.

"Look after him and give him what he needs," said Efflam. The next moment they saw him on his way towards the harbour with the enamelled dish under his arm.

The rumour swept along the shore and over the open fields. It rushed through alley-ways and streets, and climbed over stone walls, stopped at the walls of houses where the men sought shade while they smoked and talked and where the women worked and chattered. Now it had happened. Now they had seen it. The great miracle. The time of miracles was not past. Lazare, who was dead, had come to life.

Caroline sat at home on the stone wall, and she also heard the rumour. She received it without a word, but her heart beat as never before. So he had done it! He had done it! For her. The miracle she used to beg for, which she had asked for as a plaything. But now she was no longer a child with playthings. She was grown up, and the miracle had been performed for grown-up people, for those whose souls were awake. *Gloria in excelsis Deo!* St. Anne had taken her under her protection, was praying for her, would help her to live a pure, unselfish life.

"Have you got your cycle back yet?"

Caroline looked, half-awake, at her elder sister sitting down below the wall. How could anybody think of such worldly matters

now? Then her young face softened with a touch of melancholy. Her sister's words raised memories: anxiety, the chase, the lies.

"I shall never use that cycle again," she said shortly.

"Why not?" asked Marie-Jeanne, surprised. Her sister's face softened again, but now only with thoughtfulness.

"It's not mine," she said softly.

"Whose is it, then?"

"St. Anne's."

Marie-Jeanne gave her sister a quick look and went on with her work. There was much to surprise her in this, much to be silent and think about. She would not ask any more questions. But Caroline herself began to talk again about the bicycle.

"Sister Ruth has promised to find out whether there is any poor person who needs a bicycle. St. Anne will, I am sure, point out someone to whom she would like it to be given—when it has been found."

"Do you not know where it is?"

"No."

Both the girls looked up as they heard a step in the street. Then they started. The fish-dealer, Lazare, was approaching, wheeling a bicycle. From its looks it might be just the one they were talking about. They each gave a little shudder when he stopped close beside them. They were both spellbound and terrified at the sight of this man who still walked about with something of the coldness of the grave around him. Most of his head was bound up. He greeted them with a quick nod and said simply:

"Allow me to deliver Mademoiselle Caroline's bicycle."

Now it was she who nodded shortly and without a word. He stood the bicycle against the wall, bowed gravely and went away.

The girls' mother stood in the doorway looking after him. People looked out of windows and from behind house corners as he passed; the children in the street followed him. When they came closer to him he turned his stiff, pale face under the white bandages towards them and said:

"Why do you follow me? Go to him who has made me a living man!"

Then he continued on his way, strangely stiff in the legs. The big dog with its rough, iron-grey coat padded along beside him, his tail hanging low.

'He who has made me a living man,' thought Marie-Jeanne. Was he alive? She found it difficult to take part in the joy and exultation in the village. They had received the sign they had asked for, the great miracle, but she felt that after it Efflam remained in a world of his own and that he was more than ever separated from the crowd. Did he understand that one miracle only raised longings for the next? Did he realise that the people's hunger was insatiable? That by showing them this miracle he had given them the desire for that sort of entertainment? They came from far seeking him. He was interrupted in his work and had no peace when he should be resting.

The police and the doctor had been to the Kér-laérecs', but there had not been much to interrogate Efflam about. Everybody testified that he had only been there for a very short time, had told the dead man to come out, and then gone away again. Dr. Guilcher was irritated at Efflam's taciturnity, not to say indifference, but he himself lost the power of speech in his presence and only stood there swallowing. The gendarme moved his powerful, bull-like neck boldly so as to make an impression on the man on whom he had been told to keep an eye. But this very eye, yes, both the somewhat bloodshot gendarme eyes were clouded and found it difficult to meet the calm, distant gaze of the Prince.

The authorities turned with relief to Monsieur Ludwig's testimony. They found it stimulating and interesting, but it was also awkward that this intelligent and much-liked man, who both painted and wrote books and still had the leisure to drift, kept definitely to the same story: "I am no doctor," he assured them, "absolutely not. But according to my earlier experience and all my observations, I still think that it was a corpse that lay before me."

Dr. Guilcher perspired both from the heat and from emotion. He swore softly in his annoyance that he had not been in time to see 'the dead man'. He went to the priest to discuss the matter with him. The two friends decided to hold a watching brief and to take no notice of what had happened. Surreptitiously, however, they did all they could to tone the matter down. They wished to avoid both sensation and jesting about the affair.

Meanwhile the police continued their investigations, for obviously there was something irregular there. Some crime or

other must have been committed. But they could get hold of nothing definite. In whichever way the officers of the law turned and twisted the matter, they could not find any paragraph which said it was unlawful for a man, even a nameless castaway, to stand up and shout: 'Come out, Lazare!' and then go on to his destination with the fish-dish under his arm.

The fish-dealer himself had not tried to be of much help. He refused to account for his movements before the event took place. "I was a sinner and I was out on sinful business," was all he would say as he sat staring stiffly in front of him.

"What sort of sin?" asked the authorities.

"Sin against God, not against worldly authorities," he answered. "Satan was ready to receive me, but God's chosen received power to draw me away from the jaws of the Evil One. Now I will try to live a better life."

A better life, he had said. Many others had promised the same thing after the miracle among the dunes. Caroline sat quietly and happily and promised to give away her most dearly loved possession.

Only Marie-Jeanne held back—unsure—uneasy.

It was true. People had already begun to demand another miracle. "You who can open graves and tell the dead to come out, why can't you open the heavens and give us rain?" they said, bullying him, almost challenging him.

Efflam tried to avoid all groups of people. As soon as he was free from work he hurried to the empty tracts of land, away towards the bay in the north, where the undulating grass-covered dunes spread themselves out, more shiningly whitish-yellow than ever. Everything was sucked dry, bleached. The earth was dry as ashes; the cattle, tired out, like living skeletons, wandered home to the shade of the shed, and when they got there the owner could only give them, with a careful hand and pain in his heart, a little of what he had stored for the winter.

Even drinking-water had become scarce. The people stood and waited with jugs and cans so that each in turn and order might step forward to the pump which gave its water only in a thin trickle, sometimes only drop by drop.

"Give us rain!" they threatened and grumbled.

The soil was loose, crumbling. The grass was yellow where it was not altogether burnt away. The earth itself shouted its: "Rain, rain!"

Could there be anything wrong in fulfilling this desire? thought Efflam. Did not the rain give grass and flowers, calm and beauty? Did not success make people happy and generous?

"My Father," sighed Efflam, at a loss. "Your will for me is difficult to see. Or is it rather that it is so dizzily high that I, like a human worm in the dust, cannot but be dazzled by the light of your glory?" He prayed, but no advice came to him, he found no solution.

There was a light wind, and he shook in the midst of the blazing sun, as if there were a certain coldness hidden in the air. In spite of the summer clearness, there were clouds on one edge or another of the immensely great heavenly vault. Dark clouds lay low over Tréoultré. The kind of clouds that rest over the horizon without ever rising higher or influencing the weather. The sea was now so strongly blue that it seemed almost blue-black. The sky was light, immeasurably light blue-green.

Efflam lost himself for a time, gazing at this strong, shining coastline. Uncertain and restless like an unsteady wind, he then drifted hither and thither, and only towards evening did he return to the old village and reach Marie-Jeanne's quiet street.

It was more quiet than usual, and the girl seemed to be alone as she sat there in the doorway. She smiled faintly when Efflam suddenly stood in front of her.

"Are you alone, Marie-Jeanne?" he asked.

"Yes. Maman and Caroline have gone to listen to Lazare. He is speaking down in the harbour from one of the boats," she said, and thought to herself: 'And getting hold of more members for the new sect he is trying to start, with himself as the leader. He no longer mentions the name of the man who woke him.'

"They have all gone to hear him," she added quietly.

"But not you."

"No, Efflam."

"Don't you believe in Lazare's resurrection?"

She looked up and met his questioning eyes, with their somewhat confused and tired expression.

"I believe, Efflam, but——"

"But what?"

"I'm not glad about it."

"Marie-Jeanne—oh, Marie-Jeanne!" he burst out suddenly, and sat down on the ground and hid his face in her bosom. She stroked his hair carefully and tenderly.

"Marie-Jeanne," she heard him mumble, so indistinctly that she had to bend over him to catch the words, "Marie-Jeanne, they want another miracle. They are all calling for rain. The cattle are thirsty and hungry and need rain. The earth also is groaning for rain. But heaven is silent. What shall I do, Marie-Jeanne? Tell me what to do!"

"Eflam, Eflam!" Her voice was almost as light as the kiss she breathed on his temple. "Eflam, let the good God decide. Let them turn to God, let them all collect and pray for rain on St. Anne's Day. Let them pray for rain themselves, and anything else they want."

He went calmly back to his lodgings. To avoid meeting people returning from Lazare's meeting, he went a long way round. It was quite dark before he reached the Drezens' house. The blue of the sky was now as deeply dark as it had been light during the day. But now it shone thick with stars. The Milky Way stretched like a broad, milk-white road straight across it.

'That is right,' thought Eflam. 'Marie-Jeanne is right. They must collect together and pray. I am here to lead their hearts and thoughts to God and His Holy One in the heights. They must collect together and pray themselves. I will lead their prayers myself—but in seclusion, without their knowledge.'

He watched and prayed throughout the night. When at five o'clock it began to dawn, he thought again:

'Marie-Jeanne is right. On St. Anne's Day they must assemble and pray for rain.' His window-frame was coloured by a shimmer of red, and the sun stood above the cathedral at Tréoultré, infinitely splendid, shining yellow. The birds on Kerlivio's little allotment had begun their morning song.

Eflam went to his work, and the peace and joy he had felt during the night was still with him. He looked away towards the meadows which lay there in their faint colours, at the sea, which in certain stretches was shining, in others mildly green. Then he heard a strange noise. A sound he had not heard since the spring

storms and mists. The fog-siren. Was there a fog out at sea?

Had St. Anne heard him already? Did it mean that the mist was thickening, that rain was approaching? "My Father," he prayed, "it is direct from You and not through me that the gift of rain will come. It is not miracles but personal love and communication with You that they need."

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

IT WAS THE TWENTY-SIXTH OF JULY, St. Anne's Day, and even from the villages out here on the coast people set off on pilgrimage to the festival place—Auray. It was mostly the older people who braved the heat so that they might go and pray to the patroness of Brittany at her own shrine—pray for rain. Marie-Suzette was one of them. They dragged and pushed her up on to the bus, and she squeezed through the narrow door so that her coif was pushed to one side even from the start. Her neighbour, Mademoiselle Jegou, also came to the bus, and when she found her place she, like everyone else, took hold of her outer skirt and lifted it high up over her back. She then collected it carefully on to her knee so that she might not sit on the shining velvet. The underskirt of black crêpe was meant to be shown and could well stand scrutiny.

All those who had reserved places in the bus arrived one after the other until all the places were filled and the bus with straining springs rolled out of the village.

Gérard Kérlaérec and his assistant worked in the carpenter's shop. They, as always, spoke very little, and Efflam prayed for those who were praying in St. Anne's village. When the two men came out between the workshop and the house they were met by the clear, pure forehead of the day and the gloomy, blue-black face of the sea. Kérlaérec shook his head and said that he was afraid that the prayers for rain would not be answered.

"It's blowing from the lighthouse," he said, "but the west wind is not bringing rain from the sea as it usually does. It is doing nothing but dry off the moisture from the earth so that it will be more parched than ever."

Efflam gave his superior a mildly reproving look. "I have been with you so long, and yet you still doubt," he said.

"Yes, I still doubt," acknowledged the other. "I am afraid that there are not enough true believers praying away there in Auray. If you had been there, Monsieur Efflam, I should not have doubted."

Blanche came from the workshop, her apron full of chips. She also stood still, looking at the hard, dark sea and the hard, clear sky from which the sun sent down its burning rays of heat. She said to her husband reproachfully:

"Gérard, you should have asked Prince Efflam to go to Auray. I would willingly have paid his fare."

"Yes, you told me so—but I did not wish it so, I thought that Prince Efflam himself should have asked if he wanted to go. And besides, you know that Father-in-law would not have liked it."

"That is true," Blanche acknowledged. "Papa is always afraid that something will happen to the Prince. But unless Efflam prays to St. Anne the other prayers will have no effect."

Efflam was silent. It was not *his* prayers that would break the drought. It was the prayers of the many—but the drought in their own hearts must first be broken. They must attain to that link with God through which they could be happy and pure in their own minds—then they would be able to pray.

Next morning he got up as usual before the rising sun and stood at his window. He looked on a different world. A grey, blurred world—evenly and mildly grey, solacing, beneficial. It was not just night mist, but real clouds. Had the Lord of the Rain listened to the pilgrims' prayers?

After the morning meal Efflam went to fetch fish, and he took the shortest way between two rows of fodder-cabbage and then on across the wheat stubble. He was in his working clothes and bare-footed.

The hard, cracked ground between the large cabbage plants was still cool from the night air. There were drops of moisture on the edges of the leaves, clear pearls of water. Even the stone wall felt wet to the touch, and the lichen was sticky like a tough mass of rubber. The stubble pricked his feet, but it also was much less sharp than it had been, and was softening by degrees.

Was it drizzle, or was it not? Could this moisture, which pearly in the air and remained on his cheek and eyebrows, be only a mist from the sea and nothing else? The grey atmosphere was thick over Tréoultré where the sun usually rose, but it was not so smoothly even as usual, but had a faintly red sheen.

Was it the dawn foreshadowing a new, lovely, sun-clear—and dry—day? Would those who were even now over there in Auray, preparing for their departure, leave with new despair in their hearts?

Efflam looked anxiously round as he walked on. The sky grew clearer over by the lighthouse. A cock crew—did that mean another fine day? Men and women appeared in the village from different directions, leading their tottering, narrow-backed cows.

But now—the mist became a real drizzle. The rift over by the lighthouse disappeared, the red gleam mixed itself up into the thickening grey. Where the sea should be, a dream town of shining, grey-white mist appeared.

A fine, close rain was falling, as gently as tears. Kervily disappeared into clouds, so low did they lie. The lighthouse was invisible and the foghorns bellowed. Efflam's heart overflowed with happiness and thankfulness, and he wept without knowing why, blending his tears of joy with those from heaven. He saw people crouching and creeping about among the dark clouds: they were collecting the potatoes which they had allowed to remain on the top of the ground the day before. They worked slowly, as if they enjoyed getting drenched.

Efflam was soon back with the fish, and now the drizzle was so thick that nothing could be distinguished outside round the house. Everything was a whitish-blue, milk-white—with a faint green shimmer below where the fodder-cabbage, probably were.

Gérard and Blanche Kérlaérec sat solemnly and restrained at the table with their assistant, and their voices when they spoke were unnatural. They noticed it themselves, but they did not know how they alone could be natural and ordinary when the world around them was slipping into the mists of unreality. They were afraid for the young man who sat there with his hair plastered to his head like wet, warm, steaming wool. The dark skin of his cheeks still shone, and his large, sensitive nose gleamed

with moisture. His eyes were like the soft, wet earth; just as warm and good, just as secretive in what they hid.

While Efflam, true to his habits, went off with the two water-buckets, the carpenter himself stood beside the laundry-table, rolling a cigarette. While he was still smoking it the sea appeared all at once, quietly but too suddenly out of the mist. It was only a narrow, grey-blue streak, but still—did it mean that the rain was already over? There was sun in the mist, but Saint-Fiacre was hidden in a sandy-grey cloud. The towers and spires of Tréoultré, however, had a clearer light around them.

The potato-pickers on the fields farther away could be seen more clearly. The earth thrown up by their hoes was dry and grey—there was only a very thin layer of warm, dark, wet earth on the field.

Marie-Jeanne hurried along the road. She was walking too quickly, she knew that. The air was so warm in spite of the rain, so almost hot, that she felt her clothes sticking to her body. Her heart had already begun to be troublesome, it did not like her to move too violently. Yet it was just this same weak heart that was impatient to arrive. Had it not swung between hope and fear the whole morning and afternoon? Would the pilgrims follow Efflam's suggestion and pray for rain? Would the good St. Anne take up their case?

She had been up early, and faith and discouragement had alternated with the least movement in the atmosphere. When the mists thickened into rain she was happy, when it lightened in the west her hopes sank. When the soft, fine rain began to fall she could not restrain herself from going out and standing in it.

Then the sea became visible again, and the church tower in Tréoultré stood out against the sky. But even while she walked the sand-grey cloud over Saint-Fiacre began to move and swept across the gables of the houses.

The whole day was changeable. Now the mist was so thick that the sea disappeared while the earth itself was like a sea in whose white waves, as warm as wool, people bobbed in and out. The foghorns sounded like something far above this under-water world.

When Kérlaérec again shut the workshop door, and he and Efflam, after they had finished their work, once again turned and looked towards the south, they found that the whole bay lay

clear before them. A large, calm, grey-blue surface, reflecting a sky covered in evening light.

Gérard pushed his foot into the Le Flochs' vegetable garden and stirred the earth. It was as dry as ever. He looked sideways at Efflam. The latter stood straight upright, his arms hanging down and his face turned towards the bay. His expression was as calm as the clearing surface of the sea and expressed the same dumb melancholy—or indifference. The carpenter could not make up his mind which it was.

Jehan Lescantin and his son, Hugo, hoisted their sails and set out for the evening fishing. They had not grown more talkative, but the silence between them was good and full of meaning. Day by day Jehan prepared his thoughts and his mind, yes, even his body, for the coming *Pardon*. Hugo was not filled with as great a happiness as his father, but he did not now feel, as he had formerly, like a fish caught in a backwater. Life—even here in his home village—appeared to have more to give than he had thought possible. The fishing interested him more and more as his physical well-being increased. Besides, Caroline held him on land. It was true she would not look in his direction; but at the same time she looked at no one else—she sat piously at home making lace or went with her mother and sister to church. She naturally tried to get near to that Prince—Hugo himself could not avoid thinking of him. He sat there at his rudder and remembered the various times he had met Efflam, thought of the latter's unexpected appearances and equally sudden disappearances.

Jehan let the last net slip over the boat's side and gazed with a calm look at the float as it glided away. He lifted his hand and stuck out first two, then three, fingers and measured the distance between the horizon and the sun.

"Two quarters more, no three, before the sets. Let us eat our bread and then sleep."

Soon afterwards both the men lay in the open boat, gently rocked by the waves, waiting for the morning fishing.

Silently and discreetly, Guillaume-Marie spat into the jar standing by the leg of the table. He sat looking at two of the younger women in the family. Old Guillaume still had an eye for the

charms of women and liked enjoying what he saw. But at this moment there was nothing but anxiety in his rheumy eyes. He could not but think, as he looked at the two of them, that all things are transient. Not that his daughter Rose was deteriorating. On the contrary. It was becoming obvious that son-in-law Corentin's Easter leave had not been in vain. Her body, which was usually so slim, was becoming rounder and now she, like her sisters, was broad behind and round her waist. Well, well, one more grand-child was on the way.

Then there was his little niece, Caroline, who had finished at the factory and taken to the crochet-hook. She wanted also to learn to make lace and that was why she was sitting there beside Rose, who was teaching her.

Guillaume felt a twinge of conscience when he looked at this girl, who was now so well-behaved and also in a way smooth and sophisticated. He felt that he had not done all he should for his brother's girls. He who should have stood in the place of a father to them. Marie-Jeanne managed pretty well. She was strong in spirit, that girl. And then, of course, she had Prince Efflam. However much the Prince withdrew himself into his own unattainable sphere, yet he belonged to Marie-Jeanne more than to anybody else, and if anyone had the ability to follow him on his transient course it was the little lame hunchbacked girl.

But Caroline—he ought to have looked after her better. She was now leading an orderly and cleanly life, but—was it because he, Guillaume-Marie, was so worldly and attached to all that belonged to the body, that he saw what he thought he saw? The child used always to remind him of those clear, but unpredictable, seas in which it was so difficult to navigate, but in which one enjoyed oneself thoroughly, but now she was like listless, muddy water—just as her skin was muddy and blotched. What did this mean? According to his long experience it could only mean one thing: namely that it was the same with Caroline as with Rose, with, however, one great difference. His daughter Rose was married, while Caroline on the other hand—O Holy Mother of God, Our Lady of Joy, how strange are not the ways of the Lord in that he arranges it so that our earthly joy almost always ends in sorrow and misery!

Guillaume leant sideways for the tenth time and lifted up his

jar. With yet another look at the two cousins he rose and said to Marie-Suzette in the bedroom:

"I'm going to fetch a few potatoes for the cow. She can scarcely get up, she is so weak, the poor creature."

His wife appeared from her midday sleep with her hair plaited and hanging down her neck, and sleepiness in all the wrinkles and folds of her large body.

"Yes, yes, Guillaume-Marie. It's the potatoes that will surely keep her alive over this drought."

Guillaume took his cap and his pail and went out.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

AT LAST Efflam came to visit Marie Le Donche, and she confided to him, half against her will, the family's troubles. Marie-Jeanne remained sitting at her window table, working. Her mother's eyes, passing over the one to whom she was speaking, wandered over to Marie-Jeanne's head, and then out to her youngest daughter, who sat hunched up by the outside wall.

Caroline had been sitting there even before Efflam came, and she greeted him without a word, but with supplication in the eyes, which were far too widely open. Then she had bent over her lace-making cushion again with its bobbins and the many tire-some threads, which she took with patience and a care as if she apologised to each of them for the clumsiness of the small thick fingers. She looked as if she had just had a scolding.

The mother herself drew down the corners of her mouth and her wrinkles were black, as if she had not used soap and water for a very long time. She looked at Efflam as he put his bundle of notes in under the salt-jar, but her face did not relax.

"Yes," she said as if to herself, and stared out through the window, "it was in Kerscaven that it began. Then the Evil One got hold of her."

"Please, Maman, do not talk about it in that way!" begged Marie-Jeanne, but her mother continued as before.

"Yes, it was that Sunday in June. Caroline lost her head at that festival. And after that she flapped about like a hen on the chopping-block—blind and senseless."

"Caroline is sorry, Maman, and it is she who will suffer most," interrupted Marie-Jeanne.

"What then! Can one live on regrets? And has a fatherless child any joy from the fact that the mother has suffered the most? No, the poor girl! If I had only stopped her going off to that sinful fair! It is frightful that anyone can go off and lose her head to that extent."

She was stopped by looking at Efflam. 'No,' she thought, 'it's no good talking. He's not listening to me.' But Efflam had both heard and seen. He saw before him the heads turned to one side in the chair-o-plane. He said, deeply serious:

"Yes, Caroline lost her head when she went in that chair-o-plane. But she'll get it back again. Just as I will put St. Teresa's head back in its place—the very head that you knocked off in anger, Madame."

The woman looked somewhat repentant as she glanced, a little awe-stricken, at her daughter's saint. "If you would mend that head, *Monsieur le Prince*, and make it so that the damage cannot be seen I will pay you for it," she promised.

Marie-Jeanne smiled: "Would you pay, Maman?"

"Yes," answered the older Marie decidedly. And she added as she stood with sloping shoulders, her whole attitude helpless and perplexed, but not without hope: "But what's to become of Caroline?"

"Is Caroline with child?" asked Efflam.

"Yes," answered the mother shortly.

"And she does not know who the father is," Marie-Jeanne said in a low voice.

"No, he's beyond the sea, the rascal. Every time they met he gave a different name—and if he should appear I would never allow such a villain into my house," said the mother, and her face became hard as if it had been carved in stone. In spite of this a prayer was hidden in her eyes just as in Caroline's, and it suddenly escaped the dry, grey lips in a cry for help.

"Help my child!"

Efflam remained for a moment silent, then he lifted Marie-Jeanne's plaster figure from the table and, taking it with him, he went away.

At home Efflam repaired the little statue and cleaned away all traces of the damage. Just as he had finished, his opposite neighbour arrived and invited him into his room across the landing. Sixtus needed him for his work, and he followed submissively and sat as long as he was needed. Then Monsieur Ludwig, who was cooking the supper, asked Efflam to stay and eat it. The voluble man did all that he could to get a conversation going. He stirred the mayonnaise, while he talked, and when Efflam did not answer his questions he found the answers himself. It was not enough that he was almost a doctor, he was also almost a priest, and sought for clarity in many deep theological questions. The silent listener had such power in his personality that just by his presence he helped the other to find answers to his questions.

Sixtus came in from the room next door, and the bearded one invited both his friend and Efflam to come to the table.

"I'm sorry that I cannot stay," said Efflam, moving towards the door. "I thank you, Monsieur, for your kindness, but I have a task to carry out."

Suddenly he looked wide awake and seemed so 'normal' that the two men watched him, surprised and disappointed. They saw him going towards the village carrying the figure of the saint.

Efflam went straight to the Lescantins' house. Before he had greeted the three who sat at the dinner-table or given them time to greet him, he said:

"Caroline needs you, Hugo. Go to her! And give this to Marie-Jeanne."

He handed the saint to the young Lescantin, who, struck with wonder, but without saying a word, rose and went to Marie Le Donche's house. For the second time Efflam was invited to a meal, and this time he sat down and took up Hugo's spoon and continued where the latter had left off. The husband and wife sat as if they scarcely dared to move, scarcely dared to say a word. They dipped the bread into the thin soup and lifted it to their mouths with a feeling that their simple meal had become something great and full of meaning. When the uninvited guest had finished he went back to his own home.

Notre Dame de la Joie, Our Lady of Joy, had burst the walls of her chapel at the edge of the sea. The chapel stood there still,

stone upon stone, beneath its broad slate roof which, on the north side, sloped down so low that it almost touched the ground. The chapel stood there with its lichen-covered, storm-whipped west gable and its broken towers. There it stood, but spiritually it had been greatly enlarged, for it now embraced a great deal of the surrounding land. An open-air altar had been erected against the side of a grey shed that stood close by—actually the hangar for the lifeboat—and to this altar God, the great Saviour of mankind, invited the big crowds. In front of this altar also the Virgin Mother was to be praised on the day of her Assumption.

The priest with the big feet and the bold footsteps sang out his song of triumph above the many who knelt on the withered, trampled grass and the dusty ground. He had been able to keep away the roundabouts and strength-testing machines. Those that had found their way there had been set up round the seaweed factory, and while the service was going on they stood there silent.

On the broad shore-meadow a whole town of many-coloured buses had suddenly sprung up. The travellers streamed out of them, out over the meadows, filling the whole district with a confusion of costumes and dialects.

Thousands collected round the altar, kneeling out there on the grass. Among the great crowds Caroline also knelt beside Hugo Lescantin. The girl's sobs mingled with the murmur of prayers. It was the outpouring of her liberated spirit. It was the betrothal day of the two young people. Hugo's parents had willingly promised to help their son to look after the young girl as well as the child she was expecting.

This was Jehan Lescantin's great day. When the long procession wound its way across the meadows along the narrow paths and out on to the stony shore he walked in it, fulfilling his old vow. Alone in a long, white shirt over his red fisherman's costume among all the others in their festival garments he walked humbly but with his heart full of praise. The ground was hard and the stones sharp. Not until he returned to the great open-air altar and from there home to Notre Dame de la Joie in her own chapel, where he lit his candle, did he notice that his feet were bleeding. He wept aloud with happiness. The statue of Our Lady, which had been carried in the procession, stood again above

the altar, pure and clean in her white and blue garments, with her arms stretched out to those kneeling before her.

The fisherman had advanced far into the chapel, quite close to the altar, and he forgot all that lay outside. He had forgotten Efflam, who had hardly been visible this day, but who had watched the crowds from a distance. Lescantin neither saw nor remembered him because of the rapture in his own soul. The words, so easy to understand and yet so incomprehensible, made their way into his soul and echoed in his heart. From the first triumphant:

Assumpta est Maria in coelum—Mary has been taken up into heaven—to the last shattering verse:

Pulchra es, et decora, filia Jerusalem, terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata—fair and pleasant art thou, O daughter of Jerusalem, terrible as an army set in array.

Marie-Jeanne found it difficult to lift her eyes to the banners and statues moving above the heads of the crowd. Why was not Efflam here? Why was her friend so distant, so inaccessible?

She had seen him walking alone outside the packed mass of people—alone and apparently restless, expectant. She had not dared to go near him, and besides, she had felt that she should not leave the service. But nothing could stop her from seeking him again and again in her thoughts and turning her eyes outward across the burnt-up ground. Then she saw him in the distance standing in his light-red clothes. Again he vanished. She could not tell whether he disappeared altogether or had simply, like a candle in the sharp daylight, become invisible.

Now she was with the others in the chapel, but she had stopped down near the western gable where the thick bell-rope hung—where Efflam generally used to kneel. Far in the front a fisherman sobbed, rubbing his eyes with clumsy fingers. Marie-Jeanne tried in vain to collect her thoughts and to see the real Virgin Mother in the statue on the altar. After it had been taken down from its place and carried in procession, she found no more life in it than in an ordinary painted doll. Was this because Our Lady had been translated into heaven—and that she herself, Marie-Jeanne, was so earth-bound here in the valleys of the world? Because she could not keep her thoughts from him out there in the burning drought? Then she tried not to think of him, to think

of him only in her prayers, to pray strongly enough to transform Our Lady again from a dressed-up doll into a living merciful mother.

Efflam walked alone in the burning light, for now it was as if the earth itself sent out yellow flames of fire. After that one day of mist and drizzle the drought had gone still deeper into the earth. The meadows along the shore forgot that they had once been used as pastures and now lay like an old worn-out carpet. In the morning they were covered in a deep, high shimmer of sun-laced mist from the sea. It was as if the earth, newly born and clean, was still in process of formation. Efflam stood at his window, gripped and silent, feeling as if he were looking in through the master Creator's open door. Such visions gave him humbleness and endurance in this difficult time of waiting.

In the morning the sea rested, but in the afternoon the waves rose and became cold and strong in their blueness. The bathers came ashore with chattering teeth and shaking legs, but on the beach the sand was grillingly hot under the blazing sun. Now during holiday time the south shore was not nearly so peaceful as when the seaweed workers were the only people out. The miracle of the fish-dealer, Lazare, had brought many to see the 'grave'. Efflam therefore kept far away from his favourite beach and sought instead the northern stretch and the scorched dunes with their flames of heat and light.

At last there came a grey cloudy day with gusts of wind causing draughts in the roofs and on the stairs. Efflam felt full of suspense. Would it come now? Was this agitation in the air, these jerkings at the windows and the doors, a sign that something that must come was approaching? Would he receive an intimation? Would he receive a command to break up and begin his work?

During the night he listened to the windows rattling and to a lower murmur, which might mean rain. It was not, however, real rain. The ground still waited for the deep, penetrating rainfall that would soak through the dry top crust of dust, which was now so thick that it rejected any light moisture. But the drizzle passed like a fluttering curtain across the fields without touching them. And again one morning the towers in Tréoultré were again surrounded by the mocking, shimmering damp and the broad

cathedral sailed like a ghost ship, a Flying Dutchman in the mist, until the sun penetrated it again.

Then the calm weather continued and the drought gnawed and cut its way into the roots as before. In the south bay there was a line of glittering surf along the shore, but otherwise the water was grey. Farther out shorter and longer bands of strong surf could be seen in the midst of the grey where the breakers usually broke and roared. Now they were almost silent.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE HEAT AND THE DROUGHT at last reached its zenith and broke like a wave crashing and thundering up the shore. The elements came to blows in a great nocturnal storm, and people trembled and shut their eyes tightly in a fruitless attempt to wrap the warm, safe darkness round them. The lightning crossed its fiery swords above the village, and the buildings and shore stood out in an unnatural clearness in its blue-white light. This ghostly, cold, dead light forced its way through the shutters and lighted up the rooms. It cut its way through the protecting eyelids and forced the sleepers to look.

A long-drawn-out clap of thunder and a series of hard reports beat against Marie-Jeanne's house in the little blind alley. It was almost as if a block of rock had fallen against it. It dragged the young girl out of the sleep in which she longed to remain. She sat up in bed beside Caroline, who lay on her back, focusing her wide-open eyes straight upward—in prayer and terror and rapture. In the bed over there in the corner the mother's grey head, with its tied-up hair, rose now and again in the darkness—like an object in the sea which is now hidden by the waves, now thrown up into full view. Between the passivity of the tired old woman and the ecstasy of the younger one was Marie-Jeanne with her balanced wakefulness, her fear and her wonder.

The wind was now almost as strong as the thunder itself and jerked madly at the closed window-shutters. It stamped on the roof and slung the slates about and banged and hammered in the chimney. Suddenly the storm succeeded in its attack and dragged

out the rusty, but solid, old hinges, loosening the mortar in the wall. To Marie-Jeanne's terror the two wooden shutters were thrown to the side—the one was slung far away from the house, while the other banged backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards so that what was left of it eventually fell to the ground. Even at the first bang a sound of breaking glass mingled with the rest of the din. Howling, whining and banging, the storm rode in and began to play havoc in all the corners. Added to its noise was the rumbling of the thunder, now more distant, but all the more prolonged. The rain came down in torrents, and it almost seemed as if the sea wished to keep company with the storm inside the four walls.

Caroline crept far down under the blanket. Marie Le Donche, on the other hand, pulled her blanket up round her and sat hidden in it like a thick, heavy veil. Marie-Jeanne felt the rain on her face and on her arms.

"O St. Teresa," she burst out suddenly, crossing herself. "May all the blessed saints protect us and preserve us in this evil night!"

In one of the sharp, clear moments when the lightning lit up the room she saw how the storm had played havoc with her own table by the window. There was the vase which had held a few of Yves Buanic's harvest of flowers—a bunch of faded roses—which Efflam had been asked to bring her. He had given them to her with his own hands and she had grown tender over them as over all flowers. And now—the vase had been knocked down and the broken flowers washed all over the table. There on the clay floor, where little streams of rain-water flowed, she saw many bits of white plaster lying about, the lightest of them floating like rose-petals on the stream of water. The head of the saint which Efflam had repaired so skilfully was so far the least damaged and had, because of its weight, been slung farthest away. But it was cracked and wept with open mouth. In the deep darkness that followed the flash of lightning, Marie-Jeanne thought she could still see a weeping mouth—no, an evil, leering mouth. It could not be Efflam's—no, no!

Or was it his? She had had glimpses of him like this. But why should he haunt her just now? Just now when the first of the September storms was shaking them all awake after the drowsy

resting-time of summer. Just now when the wind clamoured and howled in all the cracks. When the thunder growled and the lightning showed that heaven itself had teeth. Why, added to all this, should she see the face of her friend leering at her in such a meaningless, ugly, wicked manner? For was he not goodness itself? No—it was she, she herself, who was wicked, she who had bad thoughts, creating ugly pictures out of her own imagination. Marie-Jeanne scolded herself and was ashamed of seeing evil in anybody. But she knew deep down in her balanced consciousness that she had seen aright now, just as she had seen aright earlier: the evil was true just as much as the good was true. It existed—in herself as in him.

Holy Mary, if only it had not existed in him! In him, he who was to be my strength and joy!

Marie-Jeanne lay down, and she also hid her face. Her mother thought she was afraid of the thunder.

"The thunder is not dangerous any longer, daughter. Listen, it is far away now. But the rain and the storm are increasing. Come and help me put up something in front of the window."

"I'm coming, Maman," said Marie-Jeanne. "I'll come and help you."

In the Drezens' apartment house the tenants got up after a sleepless night and looked to see what damage had been done to the house and to what extent the rain and the storm had come in and damaged their own personal property.

Yvonne Stéphan up under the roof found to her consternation that the lightning had hit her flat. True, she had felt herself surrounded by the flames of hell. True, she had at one moment been, as it were, stunned, not knowing where she was, but——

She fell on her knees, passionately hugging her youngest child.

"Look," she whispered. "Look!" she cried aloud to the boy, Jean, who had already discovered what had happened, and whose tears, like a restless, bubbling stream, were flowing over his convulsively puckered face. The next moment she was up and, with the child still in her arms, she was out on the stairs.

"Do you know what's happened?" she shouted. "Come and see what's happened! The lightning has struck down right in the

middle of her bed, but she's still alive. My baby still lives. Marie-Chantal is still alive."

They came hurrying from the Goeffrys' on the same landing and from the Kér-laérecs' and the Le Flochs' on the ground floor. The two foreigners also came up the stairs. They all went in and looked and saw the remains of what had been a child's bed, and instinctively they asked if a new miracle had happened, whether the miracle man of the house and the village had been there. Madame Stéphan declared:

"It's a pure miracle. Something told me to fetch Marie-Chantal over to my bed. It was just before the worst of the storm. I carried her into my bed and we lay there all three, far down under the coverlet. O Holy Mary—can it be imagined——?"

Her eyes searched for the only one of the tenants of the house who had not yet appeared. The others began to feel afraid. What could have happened to Efflam Kelou in the middle flat? The two artists looked at the child's broken bed and their eyes met with the same question. Where did the lightning go from there?

"I think I have found the track," said Ludwig. "Along the pipe here, right over to the other side."

"To our side," Jacques Goeffry burst out. "But we have not noticed anything with us."

"No, for it finds its way downwards, towards the earth. Has anyone seen Prince Efflam?"

"He has not been down for his coffee," answered Blanche, and everyone's fears increased. The carpenter turned and rushed in front of the others, down towards the door of his assistant's room.

They found Efflam lying on the floor, sleeping or——? Gérard pushed open the shutters, and in the light of day they saw that the lower end of the bed looked as if it had been attacked by an axe. The bed-clothes at that end were scorched, an evil-smelling smoke was coming out of the mattress, explaining the smell that had already, before they had opened the door, filled them with horror.

While they stood still, dumbfounded by all this, Madame Le Floch noticed that Efflam's eyes down there on the floor were fixed on her. Before she had time to proclaim her joy that he was still alive he began to move, but he crept slowly, and with

something almost stealthy in his movements, half-way in under the bed. The carpenter stretched out eager, helping hands.

"Dear Monsieur—dear Prince! Let me help you. Praise God you are still alive! How are you? Are you hurt?"

Efflam was helped up and, leaning on his employer's arm, he looked more closely at those in the room, and he now seemed to recognise their faces. At first, when he hardly knew where he was, they had terrified him, these dark, heavy women with plaits of hair hanging down their backs. Then he discovered out there on the stairs someone in a tall, glistening coif. She looked at him with anxious but lovingly shining eyes.

"Marie-Jeanne," he called in a subdued tone of voice. "Now I know where I am. Help me, don't let me go! Keep me here!"

The people round him were puzzled as to what he could mean by the last thing he said. The humpbacked girl, on the other hand, seemed to understand, and they drew back and left her alone with Efflam.

Now he also seemed puzzled and looked questioningly at her, seeking for help. She said, encouraging him:

"Yes, Efflam, you are in your own room, in your own village, in Kervily. And look, here are your clothes, put them on! I'll wait for you just outside the door."

She left him, and Efflam obediently began to dress. Then his eyes took in the drenched ground outside his window, and it was as if he himself in his own body felt all that had befallen the earth. Burnt and scorched it was, and beaten and whipped, and struck flat where flowers and bushes had been growing. All was bedraggled and dripping. Everywhere lay collections of rain-water reflecting the clear blue, cleanly swept sky and the passing clouds.

The earth had absorbed moisture until it was no longer thirsty and would sprout again; he himself felt that he had been impregnated with strength. He was still weak, and his limbs half benumbed, but slowly, slowly he awoke.

The time for the great spring tides of the autumn equinox had arrived. The weather had been uncertain and the sea turbulent ever since the great thunderstorm. The fishermen, however, were

at sea and those who had stopped at home took advantage of the low tide to collect shell-fish.

It was Thursday, a half-day and a holiday in the schools also. The Kér-laérecs' daughter, Lucienne, was home from Quimper, and Gérard and Blanche each left their work and took their daughter out into the ebb-land as the tide was low early in the afternoon. Efflam himself was also free to go where he wished.

In these days he was still in a sort of trance since the episode of the lightning, and in this condition he reached the part of the beach where the smaller fishing-boats were drawn up in the lee of the pier. He set out among the beached boats and found his way with the assurance of a sleep-walker between the taut ropes and the anchors, which lay with small wisps of green seaweed hanging on the flukes. Efflam sauntered towards the boats on the fringe of the water to where some young men were boarding a boat, intending to extend their 'dry foot fishing' right to the outer rocks. During these great equinoctial tides these rocks were, at low tide, once again as large as islands, shining wet and bare, with bird excrements only on the uppermost peaks and ledges and without any vegetation other than the polyps in the holes of the rocks.

Efflam had not been in a boat since his stormy voyage in the *Cormorant*. Now he stood in his passive way, watching them preparing to push off. They were three young men—Nonna Goeffry with his friends, Gilbert and Paul, with Tanneau as the older man of the party. The latter suddenly spread out his arms in a gesture as if he were imitating his friend Lescantin and bellowed cheerfully:

"*Monsieur le Prince* has come to honour us. Stand aside, boys, the Prince will board this schooner!"

And Efflam obediently went aboard and took his place between Nonna and Gilbert. They punted themselves along through the shallow water and laid-to by one of the rocks. They all landed. Apparently quite unconscious that he was no longer on dry land, but in a place out at sea, Efflam moved round the rocky island in the same rhythm as before and remained standing there, letting the wind drag and push him as it willed.

In the meantime the boys and Tanneau behaved more boldly, going up and down the uneven bits of rock, penetrating into the paths, gulleys and shafts which the water had worn out in the rock.

They took it in turn to be let down into the crevices with a rope round their waists and round their tools. Dangling at the end of the rope they hooked themselves fast to any protruding points, and then attacked all that had 'taken root' in the hidden holes of the rock and which formed a sort of garden as difficult to get at as it was unique. The boys took all they could, cutting off what looked like petrified branches that clung upwards and outwards row by row or collected itself in heavy, darkly mixed 'fruit clusters', which also were petrified. They knew that this which had the form of plants and the colour and hardness of minerals belonged to the animal kingdom and hid much edible meat. The chance was quite unusual and very risky, and the young fishermen enjoyed it.

Tanneau, the eldest among them, who should have reminded the others how the time was passing, soon left them. The Lescantin father and son were in the neighbourhood, and Tanneau hailed his friends and got them to take him to the other side of the rocky islet to a tract where enormous, loose blocks were spread out over the sea-bed. Thanks to the fact that these stones still lay under water, they could be lifted by hand. Both Jehan and Tanneau were as strong as blacksmiths and liked to discover what they were capable of doing. They puffed and blowed and snorted and shouted loudly when with a great deal of splashing and with showers of water they moved the stones, and called to Hugo to look whether any of the rare mother-of-pearl snails had come out.

The youths on the outer side of the rocky islet had entirely forgotten the time. Not until Tanneau and Jehan signalled to them did they notice that the ledge on which they stood would soon be covered by the tide. It was already cut off from the larger rock area, for a gully that a short time ago had been empty was now full, but it was not so broad but that they thought they could jump across it. The rock itself sloped towards a lagoon-like pool inside still another plateau, a sharp, upstanding edge of rock of a tip-tilted ridge. They urged each other to get away. Then they heard the noise of sliding earth and a series of small bangs; the rope tied to their bundle of tools had in the general haste become loose, and the tools now slid down into the crevice from which Nonna and Paul had just managed to escape. The last bang of the falling pick-axes and spades became a splash, as the waves

had already entered the shaft through some hidden opening, and it was like a giant churn in which the sea-water, like a rising yellow-white foam, was driven round and round.

The boys were very unwilling to leave their tools behind them, and they pulled at the rope in an effort to loosen it from whatever was holding it down. But it had all to be done very carefully and patiently. The sea thundered angrily behind them, and one heavy shower of spray after another broke over them as they lay on their faces round the opening to the shaft. Paul turned his head for a moment towards the sea, and it immediately became as wet as that of a newly-washed child. The seas rode high against the long, sharp ledge of rock, increasing in strength—and threw themselves, loudly thundering, over the ridge that was in their way, pouring into what had lately been a calm lagoon. They surged back from the ridges and were thrown once again against the tip-tilted block, breaking again and again, finally with a snowfall of loose flakes of scum like a swarm of fluttering birds. The mass of water squeezed and swirled and was forced by the next big wave as it approached, high-crested, demonstrating far in advance that it was prepared for a heavier attack than that of the previous waves.

"She's rising tremendously fast," shrieked Nonna. "The wind has risen too. We'll have to leave our tools behind us!"

"I'm damned if I can afford to lose my pick-axe," shouted Gilbert, and gave another pull, but this time less carefully.

Paul threw a hasty glance far over the rocks. Lescantin's boat, in which were three men, was on its way to anchor in the sheltered lee-side. He also noticed another person who was walking on their islet, a person they had all forgotten during the last few minutes of breathless excitement: Efflam Kelou. The next moment he had disappeared from Paul's consciousness.

Gilbert gave another pull, lost his footing, slipped and rolled with the rope and a spade which was attached to it, falling backwards down the sharp incline. Half-way down he was met by a great wave and was lifted high into the air. For a fraction of a second his friends saw him lying as if on the back of a mettlesome steed—or on the summit of a mountain, which dashed down, burying him in its fall.

The two other boys saw that they themselves were also in grave

danger of the same thing happening to them, and realised that it was time they got into safety. Their friend and companion was lost beyond rescue, for here human strength was useless.

"Gilbert," they cried as they stood on the other side of the crevice across which they had jumped. Their tearful cries for help were heard above the noise of the water, while their eyes sought for their comrade in a desperate hope of seeing a glimpse of him again. Then suddenly something came between them, an unexpected person pushed his way past them in a long, light jump across the water-filled crevice and out on to the ledge, which was now covered with water. It was Efflam. He ran down the slope.

The two boys on the ledge stared: more and more of the submerged rock became visible, the water was sucked outwards. It was as if the sea itself had receded in obedience to the young carpenter.

"He'll save him! He'll do it!" shouted Paul. Behind them they heard the three fishermen from the other side of the rock. Lescantin joined in now, panting from exertion, but exalted, happy.

"He'll do it! He'll risk his life! Our Prince is risking his life for another!" Strong, hard-headed Lescantin's voice broke and then failed him. Hugo stood beside him, his face also trembling with emotion. Tanneau was pale from excitement.

Efflam got hold of the drowning boy. It was as if the sea itself were helping him. The senseless body was thrown against him, he had only to catch hold of him, hold him and lift him with all his strength.

The astounded and excited men higher up, who watched breathlessly all that was happening, saw at that very moment a great wave approaching from far out at sea, gathering momentum as it came, its crest white and its base as green as the depths of the sea.

Now it was there, lifting itself with characteristic ease over the deeply hidden stonework. Still lifting itself—lifting itself——

They backed quickly, for the wave was larger even than they had thought. Was the sea avenging itself? Was it returning with reinforcements? Holy Mary! All became water and the thundering noise of hell.

Then it was past. They stood there like drowned rats, those five who had seen the wave come. And the seventh, Gilbert lay at their feet, carried ashore.

They acted quickly and without hesitation, knowing at once what should be done. Gilbert was quickly moved higher up the rock. Those who were not needed for lifting him began to look about for his saviour, the miracle-worker himself, their prince, where was he?

All the saints! There was no sign of him.

But yes, a glimpse of blue in the green. Efflam in his blue working clothes. The water in the 'lagoon' was now like the most terrible cauldron, and it threw him hither and thither as if he had been a piece of material which was to be rubbed clean. And now—what now?

As if the process were finished and he was to be transferred into a larger tub to be rinsed, he was thrown over the stonework and disappeared from sight. Then they saw the bit of blue again, but it was over beside the stormiest point.

The fishermen were filled with a sudden hope and determination, and resolutely they rushed forward and began to fight the sea. Jehan and Hugo ran to the boat to bring it as near in as possible.

He worked with the strength of despair, hitting out with his arms and legs against the approaching mountains of water which threw him about and twisted him as they liked, filling up his nose, his mouth and his lungs. Now he had found something to take hold of. It was hard and sharp and cutting, but he only noticed that it was something to hold on to. The waves continued to attack him, but he clung fast. Yes, he managed to get higher up, so high up that his mouth was free. Almost free, for the sea continued to dash water into his face, but he could breathe between those suffocating showers, and sometimes he saw quite clearly out over the tops of the waves.

He could see no boat. Had it sunk, or had it been dashed to pieces? If so, he was lost. He hung on to the spiky stones for an eternity. Eternity, death—the death from which he was fleeing had caught up with him at last. He was terrified, but most terrified of that face which he had seen before him the many days he

had been at sea, and which showed itself still more clearly to him here in this whirlpool. That face, the lower part of which was crushed to pieces, while the eyes, helpless, praying, were turned towards him. He saw them, and they made his hair rise on his head. But he had been obliged to do what he had done. Hit, hit until the blood flowed! His hell would consist of an eternal repetition of what he had once done.

Ah! He heard a cry above the thunder of the sea. It was the satisfied laughter of Satan. Or was it his own wild cry he had heard? Now the face was there again, and he must hit, hit out against the helpless, prayerful eyes. He must extinguish them, do away with them. He must crush the whole face so that it would be unrecognisable, while the blood flowed out into the sea, which would be coloured red from it.

Once again he saw a face, but another face, a strange face, and he became afraid of his pursuers. Again he hit out, slung out his clenched fist with such force that he lost his hold on the rocks to which he was clinging. He fell back, not into the arms of the sea, but into the arms of men.

"He's alive, he's waking up! God be praised!" a voice came clearly to him. Fear took hold of him again.

Where was he? How far from the damaged car and the bloody face—and—all the rest?

He was afraid to show his face and tried to keep hidden, crouched with his face downwards away from the voices. Someone took hold of his shoulders.

"Prince Efflam! Prince Efflam! Our dear Prince! Thank God you are still alive!"

"Why do they call me that?" he thought. "What strange words, what a strange name—do they take me for someone I am not?"

His brain was clear enough to think, and he decided to go very carefully to work. He must be sly, find out whether they had really changed him into someone else. And if so, whom?

"Our dearest Prince, we hope that we shall not hurt you when we lift you into the boat. We must get you home."

The voices were there again, and he listened carefully, but still tried to keep his face hidden. They could not understand this, and one of them said:

"But, Monsieur Kelou, why are you drawing away from us? We only want to help you. You who risked your life to save Gilbert."

Kelou, he thought. What a strange, foreign name! If only he could reckon out where he was! If he had been more of a sailor he would have been able to decide in which direction and for how long the jolly-boat had drifted. But he knew nothing but that he had drifted under the sun, the hot, blazing sun. It shone mercilessly in the heavens up there and it seemed as if it could find nothing but the little rowing-boat, the little oarless boat, in which lay his tired, melting brain, on which to concentrate its rays. The sun was dangerous so early in the spring, they had said that of old at home. Treacherous it was, and he had been exposed to its rays for several days while he drifted. It was like the old Patriarch—in the days he was flayed by the heat, and at night he suffered from the cold.

Later on, the sky became leaden and the sea also, and there was no sun to tire him, but neither was there a sun by which to orientate himself. The stars came out, but he knew nothing about them.

And now here he was, a shipwrecked man in the power of these unknown men. Where were they taking him in this boat, with its chugging engine in the stern, in which they had put him to bed as if it were in a cradle?

What was this language they spoke among themselves? It was foreign, and yet he knew what they were talking about. It was something he had heard in his childhood. Yes, now he remembered it: the Jezegabels had talked like that in their home at Cap Brun, and sometimes he and Alexis had spoken the same language in their games. When they did so, the other children could not understand them, but he, Gilles, could understand it in the same way as he understood these thick, guttural sounds. The Jezegabels were from Brittany.

Then it was Breton he was hearing. He was in Brittany. He had been carried northward. No wonder that the heat was followed by cold. An icy cold, which tired him more, especially as the bread and bottle of wine he had found in the jolly-boat had been finished long ago. The cold and weakness and fright had increased with the storm, which slowly grew and made the mono-

tonous blue-grey surface into mountains and valleys between which his boat was thrown.

And how his head ached. Sometimes he had forgotten his fear because of the pain in there behind his forehead and at the back of his head.

Then came the shipwreck, when the jolly-boat was broken into bits or was swept away from under him, he did not know which. Nor did he know how many days had passed since then. Everything had been a struggle against green-black darkness and the weight of green-black masses of water. And now, finally, this tussle with the sharp rocks.

All this had not carried him farther than across the bay from the west coast to some place in Brittany. If he had only reached Ireland or Cornwall. Or Belgium! That was where he wished to go. Farther away, if possible—to America! What was he saying, this older man with the sentimental, thick voice?

"Prince Efflam, don't be sorrowful, we are all saved. Gilbert, God be praised, is also almost unhurt. He has only got himself a blow in the face. That he got when with the rope round his waist for safety, he went out to get hold of you, my Prince. You had risked your life for him, and he wanted in his turn—we could not keep him back, but no doubt he was weak after his own baptism of salt water, and for that reason he somehow got hit. I hope that you have not suffered more severe damage, Prince."

"No!" Efflam cut him short, pushing away the helpful hand as he turned his face away. "Don't touch me!" he added violently.

"But we're in harbour, we've laid-to at the pier," said Lescantin, sad that the other man was so difficult.

"Shall we come down and help the Prince out of the boat?" came voices from above. He then became conscious that several persons were standing close beside him, preparing to lay hands on him, and he turned away and raised himself up into a sitting position. Come what might, he was still ready to do what he could to save his skin.

He saw a number of red and blue trouser legs belonging to those who were in the boat with him, and a number of brown hands, patchy and with scratched skin, and coarse, maltreated nails.

Their arms hung down so heavy and awkward, and their hands fumbled at the edges of their trouser pockets as if they did not know whether to hide them in there or not. Suddenly he felt both assurance and contempt in him: the owners of such hands were scarcely to be feared. They were labourers' hands. They were shy and awkward. He looked past them, away across the water of the harbour, where the boats lay bobbing and creaking between their side props. He got up.

What he saw as he stood up in the middle of the boat struck him at first as being a picture that he had seen before. The details in it had a certain intimacy. But the longer he looked at it the more it stood out; it was no longer a flat picture. It had depth, it was a real world.

This village with white, rain-spotted gables and broad chimneys, these gloomy back-walls without windows, this flat country without trees.

Suddenly he remembered, and the shock was so great that the blood streamed to his heart, leaving his face dead white. The nearest in the boat stretched out a supporting hand.

"How are you, Prince?"

His stiff lips formed themselves into a smile. 'My Prince,' the words echoed in his mind, 'my Prince——'

Yes, he was their prince, their Prince Efflam. His name was Efflam Kelou. Oh, that they might never learn to know him as anyone else. And there he stood, that old fisherman and seaweed-harvester with his thick voice and his sentimental eyes hidden under bushy eyebrows.

"My dear Lescantin, help me up on to the pier and home," said he. "To-day I will visit your house."

Then he turned and thanked those standing round him in a little speech, and turned also to the many others who had assembled on the pier itself. A large, blue-green lorry was standing there, and the man in it looked down from his sky-high position, down at the speaker in the boat. He wiped a tear from the corner of his eye, while at the same time he listened attentively to all that was said.

Jehan Lescantin had started when Efflam first began to speak. It was as if there was something new in the Prince's voice, just as there was something strange in his words. The fisherman's joy

that Efflam was at last more responsive was, however, so great that he did not reflect for long over his misgivings.

"My Prince," he said, and his voice was thicker than ever in his throat. "My Prince, never has my house been happier than to-day when you wish to visit it. My wife will be glad to receive you. Hugo's fiancée, Caroline, is with her to-day. Perhaps she will also invite little Marie-Jeanne." •

'Marie-Jeanne,' repeated Efflam in his thoughts, as they began to go, following the lorry, which, however, soon disappeared up the village street. 'Marie-Jeanne,' he thought again while people greeted him from the right and from the left, greeted him with a reverence and devotion greater than ever before.

'Marie-Jeanne——?' The name was very familiar to him. At the same moment he saw one of the lame girls in the village and then he remembered. It was she, the little hunchbacked, lame girl. To think that he had experienced that also!

This must be a fantastic village. A strange world beside the sea. And now he was entering it for the second time. But this time as he really was, Gilles Capart, from down there in the South. As Gilles Capart, but only to himself. Outwardly he was still Prince Efflam.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

ALL THE PEOPLE THEY MET on their way through the village greeted Efflam with increased reverence. The rumour had spread, and everybody knew what had happened out there on the rocks. The Prince had risked his life to save a man. The Prince had subdued the sea and in this way had performed a great miracle and given a new proof of his supernatural gifts.

He accepted these marks of reverence as if he had been Efflam, but the other one—Gilles—looked round suspiciously to see whether they were honestly meant. Might not someone among all these people stumping about so loudly in their wooden shoes or peeping round the corners of the side streets and from the washing-tables on the other side of the low walls—might not someone suspect who he was? One or other of them might remember having

seen a picture in a newspaper or a poster outside the police station. The picture of his face which had always been conspicuous and which stayed in the memory so much better than the very ordinary name of Capart.

He tried to push aside the name, but the face remained. He would have to carry that with him all his life as a living advertisement. The prominent nose, which even he himself was continually forced to see. There it was between his eyes like a shadow or a strange little cloud, following him wherever he went and whichever way he turned. Several times he lifted his hand to his face and kept it there, shadowing his nose. People noticed the gesture—Prince Efflam used never to do that. Perhaps he had been injured out there after all. Jehan Lescantin asked:

"Have you a headache, *Monsieur le Prince*? You'll feel better when we get home and you get a little food inside you and some dry clothes. I know that the wife has something good and powerful in her saucepan to-day—real meat."

Efflam walked on without answering—with a strange, enigmatic smile on his lips. This little ironic smile was also in his eyes. So far only young Gilbert had noticed it. He had, of course, been rescued by this miracle-worker, but a moment later had seen this same person looking at him with fear and hatred in his eyes, trying to take his life. He had given Gilbert such a blow with his clenched fist in his face that he still felt his left eye swelling and beginning to ache.

They had arrived at the Lescantins', and their plates were filled with good meat food. The guest sat there dressed in the clothes that had been lent him. But the underclothes belonging to the slim Hugo were tight and uncomfortable and they saw him clutching at himself both behind and before in a way that Efflam never did, for he used to seem entirely unconscious of his body. The outer clothes, which belonged to Jehan himself, were on the other hand short and wide and hung sack-like about him, altering his appearance. He chewed with difficulty, and they all looked at him sympathetically, including Caroline, who was there. Madame Lescantin asked anxiously:

"Don't you like it, Prince? I thought I was offering you something so good and strengthening. It is not often that we have meat. All butcher's meat is so dear nowadays."

'Capart,' thought the guest. 'Gilles—Gilles!' He could hear them still, those penetrating children's voices. He saw again the different school yards: the school yard in the little mountain village north-east of Marseilles, the school yard in another village nearer the town, and then in Marseilles itself. And away there at Cap Brun, and then again in Marseilles. Sandy, hot, plantain-shaded squares; stone-hard, shady squares with the mistral blowing in over the high, greyish-yellow walls and whirling up dust and sticks. From them all rose the same shrill cries: "Gilles, Gilles! Gilles Capart!"

Now he saw before him a tall, narrow figure, ending in a nose which might be used as a handle, so long and bent it was. Above this big nose there was not much to speak of: a pair of close-set eyes in the little buttoned-up top of the head. There was simplicity but also fanaticism in those eyes, hidden above the all-dominating beak of the nose. That was Aristide Capart, his father, whose mouth never smiled.

There was more movement in the woman in their home, Ida Capart. As she went about the house she often made an acid joke either to the father or to the son. The joke, like her smile, was always far above the child's head, always belonging to something outside the world that he, Gilles, knew. He saw it now, sitting in Lescantin's house, that mouth that smiled without smiling. For Ida's face also seemed to end in the nose. Her gaze was always far, far away. And she herself was incessantly away. Aristide too went on long journeys. Then the boy was left alone in the quarter—alone with the neighbours, while in his secret soul deep down within him was born something which one day would spring forth as hatred and desire for revenge. "Gilles, Gilles," cried the piercing voices from long ago as if from the other side of the grave. For he was called Gilles Capart—until he became Auguste—and then Napoleon—

He started at the sound of a voice. Caroline was saying that she had been to the Kér-laérecs' and finished by mentioning something about the gendarme who had been asking questions about the foreigners in the house. He started and clutched at his clothes, the borrowed clothes, the pockets of which were strange to him, forgetting that he never carried his identity papers about with him. He knew, however, what was written on those papers of his.

He was no longer Capart, nor Auguste, nor Napoleon. He was Efflam Kelou.

"The gendarme goes about his business," he said. "It is mere routine. He has seen my papers and knows my name—Kelou."

"Just so, *Monsieur le Prince*," said Lescantin mildly and soothingly. He rose and stretched himself. Caroline cleared the table, seemingly thoroughly at home. She had begun to flower anew in her young pregnancy and moved softly and prettily. Her betrothed, who during the meal had been sunk in his own thoughts, hid himself behind a paper. Lescantin's eyes followed the young woman in her helpfulness about the house.

"Marie-Jeanne did not come after all," he said.

"No. She had not got back. There is still so little green stuff, and she is always anxious to fill the sack before she comes home," explained Caroline.

"Yes, yes, Marie-Jeanne is like that. But keep a portion of meat for her. She's beginning to look rather thin. She works too much and eats too little. Take a bowl of meat for her and your mother, Caroline. I will take Prince Efflam home, if you will allow me to do so, *Monsieur*?"

The one addressed laughed a short, unusual laugh. "Yes, I need an escort," he said and tried to suppress the fear he felt over going out again along the main street. He walked a few steps in front of his 'escort', his neck stiff and without looking round at his companion, but listening in a strained way for the reassuring tramp of the latter's sabots.

Yves Buanic had been in his lorry up towards Tréoultré and was now returning, munching his chewing-gun to pass the time. Then he saw a small figure, eagerly swinging along, with a high, white coif on her head, and carrying a sack. Why, it was Marie-Jeanne Garrec, he thought. Elegant little Marie-Jeanne, the poor child who walked so badly and who also had to drag about with the hump on her back. He braked and was in a moment down beside her picking up the sack full of the green stuff which she had collected along the roadside.

"Always hurrying along, my industrious little mademoiselle! May I offer you a lift? There, there, little Cousin, let old Buanic lift you up into the seat beside him. You're as light as a feather.

You've grown thin, you work too hard and eat too little. Are you comfortable? Good!—Now do you know, dear Marie-Jeanne, do you know what happened just as I started from the harbour an hour ago?"

Then Yves told her how he had seen the men returning with Efflam and what had happened out there among the rocks. Finally he said thoughtfully:

"I heard Prince Kelou himself speak. He made quite a little oration. He thanked for help and rescue and for his good reception, all very logical and clear. But there was one thing that I noticed, Marie-Jeanne, and that was the Prince's way of speaking. He spoke in that singing way that I remember from the time when he first came. But still more so. More. A very definite dialect from a definite part of the country with which I am not altogether unacquainted. Now, would you like to do me a service, Marie-Jeanne?"

The girl turned her face to her companion. A couple of red spots had sprung up in her sunburnt cheeks. She sank so low in her seat as she sat there beside the lorry-driver that she scarcely reached to the windscreen.

Yves braked suddenly and stopped by the roadside. In front of them lay the village, and hidden behind it the harbour. Marie-Jeanne was anxious. She had been anxious ever since that night of thunder, and now her anxiety turned into fear. She looked at the man at the wheel and asked simply:

"What do you want me to do for you, Yves?"

"Give me a hard blow on my mouth!"

She gave him another look and, although her features were almost immovable, they mirrored her thoughts of friendly suspicion, surprise and patience as with a child. Finally her features, as her eyes, showed only gravity.

"That wouldn't help, Yves Buanic," she said.

He sighed and put his hand on the self-starter without, however, moving the lorry. "No, that's true enough. It wouldn't help. But ask your St. Teresa to make Yves Buanic a better man. Will you do that, Marie-Jeanne?"

"My St. Teresa is broken to pieces," answered the girl. "I have only a bowlful of pieces left."

"Oh, my dear child! My dear child!" the man burst out

sympathetically. "And I've brought you some flowers for her. Look, there in the basket underneath the seat. Prince Efflam would naturally have brought them to you, but perhaps you will take them direct from the coarse hand of a lorry-driver."

They went on into the village, and Marie-Jeanne sat thoughtful and silent with a bunch of drooping carnations on her knee. After a time Yves asked:

"Would you like me to stop here at Efflam's house, or to take you to your own street? Or will you come home with me?"

"Stop at my own street, please."

Marie-Jeanne got down at the entrance to her little lane, which was too narrow for the broad lorry. Holding the flowers against her breast and half dragging the sack with the rabbit food, she limped homewards. The wind nibbled both at her and at her burden. It went straight through her blouse and her woollen shawl and wrapped the soft skirt round her thin legs. She heard the broken window-shutter banging against the wall. The last slat might fall off at any moment. The other shutter had gone altogether. It had been found on the other side of the wall in their neighbour's garden. Now the Kér-laérecs had it for repair. It had been said that Efflam would make them new shutters.

Efflam, her friend, who had never been the same since that night of thunder. No one had said anything about it, perhaps no one had noticed it. Now, however, he seemed to have altered more visibly.

She turned at her own wall and looked across all the other low walls down past the houses, between which could be seen the grey-green waters of the sea. The tide was rising. In half an hour it would be full tide. It was already so high that it looked as if at any moment it might push its way between the walls of the houses. If the spring-tide rose above the low, sandy protection of the dunes, the more low-lying meadows would be at its mercy. They had had floods of this sort before and there was therefore constant uncertainty at this time of year. Especially on a day like to-day and most of all at hours like these when the moon was new. The sun and moon co-operated and worked on the water masses, forcing them back until the sea seemed almost lost to view. Then in the course of only a few hours they were forced back nearer and nearer until they seemed ready to swallow up the village,

higher and higher until they overtopped the horizon and even heaven itself.

It was the week of the autumn equinoxes. But if the day and night were equal, nature was anything but uniform. Out there among the rocks something had happened that awoke misgiving. They talked about a miracle; the waves had been subject to him and had drawn back. But they had returned again, and he himself had been in danger. And that was not all, something more than that must have happened. She had a fear in her heart as never before. She remembered her dream of long ago. How the woman with the great, living heart in her hand had run, and run, until the heart fell and broke into pieces like her statue of St. Teresa

She remembered how he had been given to her that day early in February. How she had been allowed to own him all through the stormy, but wonderfully strong, light, spring and during the whole long, quiet, sun-baked summer. It was as if the sea after the spring storms had been forced by means of a great miracle to stand aside, with all its restlessness and cruelty. Was it now coming back in greater and more voracious autumn tides than had ever before been experienced? Would it wake her from her long lovely summer dream, and in its place make the other dream, the nightmare, a reality to her? Whatever happened she would never give up loving him, never give up praying for his welfare.

Efflam and Jehan Lescantin passed the Garrecs' house and were greeted by the women, who in spite of the bad weather were out of doors, crouched down in the shelter of the wall, crocheting. The children were also playing outside, and they stretched out welcoming arms to the two men.

"Good-day, Prince Efflam, good-day, Monsieur Lescantin," they shouted. "Come and tell us about the new miracle!"

Efflam stopped and looked at them; his 'escort' was still a step behind him. He fixed his eyes on the smallest of the Buanic girls, little Eliane. Marie-Pierre stood beside the wall with a big safety-pin in her mouth. She was arranging the child's underclothing in some way.

"Stand still now," she told her as well as she could with the pin between her lips. Eliane herself helped by lifting up her dress high

under her arms while her mother pulled out the ragged piece of elastic from the waist of the short pants and fastened them up with a safety-pin. It was done quickly, and Marie-Pierre smoothed down the girl's crumpled dress and then lifted her frank black eyes to the man on the road. The latter's eyes were still fastened on Eliane, who now suddenly threw herself from the wall on to his neck.

"Carry me in, Prince Efflam. Carry me in! I was just on my way to bring you some pancakes. Carry me in and I'll give you the parcel."

He took her in his arms and went with her towards the door. Marie-Pierre turned her back, but Rose and Lucie followed him with their eyes and, without either of them knowing why, a little displeased look darkened their faces. Marie-Louise was also there, and she, the most sceptical of them all, clothed her displeasure in clear thoughts. Why was he carrying the girl in that way, she thought, pushing his hands with the long seeking fingers in under her dress? It did not look at all well.

She went into the kitchen after the others and saw that he put Eliane down on a chair, but that he still held her with one hand, while with the other he took the glass of rum Marie-Suzette offered him. Guillaume stood beside him, touched and tearful. When Efflam left, the old man went with him as company, while Lescantin returned home.

"My dear friend, Monsieur Efflam, my dear foster-son," said Guillaume as they walked along. "How glad I am that you escaped unscathed from the danger. Our wonderful Lady of Joy was merciful to us all when she preserved you for us. Promise me that you will not run any more risks."

"Monsieur Garrec, you are forgetting to keep a step behind me. An escort must always be just behind the person he is escorting."

"But my friend—my—dear Monsieur Efflam," stammered Guillaume, utterly bewildered. "Don't you wish me to walk beside you? I beg your pardon—I am a stupid old man. I understand so little of what is called etiquette. I beg your pardon for behaving so badly."

Guillaume grew silent. That tall neck in front of him did not seem interested in what he was saying. The old man's sad eyes

still watched this same neck while he, understanding nothing, but readily obedient, followed a step behind. He did not see the strange smile that once again disfigured his foster-son's mouth.

As Efflam walked along with the old man's uneven footsteps following behind him, he began to think of something that had once happened. He saw a 'man—a very young, but unusually mature man, himself, Gilles Capart—no, he was called Napoleon then. He was only known as Auguste while he served in the Resistance Movement. Now he was Napoleon and was walking along la Cannebière in Marseilles. He was dressed in high, shining, well-fitting top-boots—for he was not eligible for uniform, but he was allowed boots. Behind him walked a soldier. They were on their way to the rue Paradis to one of the offices of the Gestapo. He had been sent for to take part in the examination of two prisoners from the Maqui group. It was as a member of this group he had chosen the name of Auguste—later on he went over to the other side as Napoleon, and it was then he had been given his top-boots. He was sent round the country. He had been to Paris and he had used the opportunity to see all that he had always wished to see. In his grand top-boots he walked across many shining parquet floors, even through the great rooms at Versailles. He was also active at one time in Bordeaux and took his part in the great killing within the Resistance Movement there. He reported many to the Gestapo's sleuth-hounds, and thanks to the scent he gave them they sniffed their way to groups in other parts of the country. He was greatly praised for his helpful co-operation in the destruction of an important sea-communication between Western France and England. Several people unknown to him in farthest Brittany had been caught and killed in this connection. This was the occasion he had been sent for and had walked along as if he had had an escort—he was allowed to be present at many 'examinations'. He saw also women undressed and thrown into the ice-bath, saw them standing there shivering and blue with cold and crushed by shame—without giving away anything of what they knew.

The examination of Jehovah's Witnesses on the other hand provided no incidents. If he had not given them away to the Gestapo, they would doubtless have been left in peace, but their own

writings condemned them, and they were sent to concentration camps.

He saw before him the group when early one morning, while it was still dark, they were hoisted up into large covered cattle-vans to be sent away. Untidy, with many bruises after their first few days in prison, dressed in the light clothing they had worn when they were taken as they sat round the table at their Bible reading in the warm room. He had met his mother's eyes as he stood there in his well-polished top-boots when they looked at him in a way that he longed to forget. For the last time he saw his father's long, lanky figure in his working clothes, his carpenter's clothes, as he lifted his arms to defend himself against the blows that descended on the prisoners. He saw his father's long, pale hands, with the stumped first fingers and the short, nail-less little finger for the last time. Aristide seemed to see nothing, not even his son who had betrayed him, but at the last moment before the shutter was put up Gilles heard his voice—that wild fanatical voice which he had so often heard at the meetings at home.

"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. I will repay," it shouted now.

In this way his father had called down the vengeance of heaven, over him, Gilles Capart, just as he cursed the whole crowd of hangmen that brought him to the concentration camp at Mautausen. As they moved away, singing was heard from within the barred truck.

He had an escort when he went to the rue Paradis, and also when he found his way into the alley-ways and suburbs of the provincial towns—an armed escort, for he still knew many who had secretly taken part in the Resistance Movement, and he was filled with the lust for denouncing.

This lust continued until after the eventful August days when the secret 'terrorists' came into the open and showed that they were an army, when the bombing planes and lorries of the liberating troops came thundering in from all directions—they came from their hiding-places in the valleys and from caves in the mountains, from the air and from the sea, and he and many others like him were scattered like sheep when lightning strikes down in the middle of a flock. The time had passed when he could go in and out among the foreigners with a cigar in his mouth, his

top-boots shining. But he, Capart—Napoleon—Auguste, had time for one more deed of treachery: he came upon his old escort, the kindly German soldier. This man had managed to escape and he was already half-transformed, half-dressed in civilian clothes, French below and German above, when he on Gilles's denouncement was dragged out of his hiding-place, a miserable bundle of terror. He attempted to escape but was shot down. This episode gave the denouncer himself the opportunity to get on to the right side.

And now—here he was with an escort again? Could it be the dead soldier, tramping behind him and whose snufflings he heard?

Efflam turned round unexpectedly and, fixing Guillaume with his eyes, asked violently:

"Why are you following me?"

Guillaume stood still, his mouth half-open. He was astounded, and blanched before that look and at hearing such words from him who meant more to him than any of his own sixteen children. Then his mouth fell open again with a jerk of the tired jaws. Silently he turned and walked homewards.

Efflam stood alone in the middle of the main street. Alone to receive the curious glances of those who came and went. Only now did he notice how solitary he was. He was shivering with cold. The wind sought its way into the wide, short sleeves and trousers, and in under the jersey, which was too big for him and open at the neck. He carried his own wet clothes under his arm. Madame Lescantin had pushed them all into a large sou'wester, but the contents of the parcel spread out in all directions, and the wetness from the clothes had made the whole of his left side damp. He felt chilled through and through.

He began to tremble, and as he looked down across last year's potato fields and the fields of stubble, which were now growing green again, it seemed to him that the meadow-land that should be beyond them was quite obliterated. So large had grown the sea. He felt frightened. Was it not coming to take him, this sea to which he had fled to escape from the fruits of his own deeds? Which he had fought with and from which he had been saved. Who was it who had saved him? He had been saved by a young woman, a virgin-mother—was she not called this? Marie-Jeanne. It was strange that he had not seen her to-day. Did this mean that

this time the sea would be allowed to take him?

Terrified, gazing suspiciously from side to side, he walked the last bit of the road to his home.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

GÉRARD AND BLANCHE KÉRLAËREC received Efflam silently, shaking him emotionally by the hand as if they were welcoming him back to life and to his family. They had themselves returned not so long ago from their expedition, and Lucienne came and showed him the mussels they had found and smiled proudly with all her freckles. The carpenter said to his wife:

"Can we hurry on our meal so that Monsieur Kelou will have something to bring him to life?"

"I thought so myself," answered Blanche, "but first of all he must change his clothes. That Lescantin costume makes him look like a robber. We are not used to seeing him with his chest exposed. And the whole of one side is wet, Prince. Give me that bundle of clothes."

While the underclothes fell to the floor she shook out the trousers and the coat and looked at them carefully.

"Your clothes must be both washed and mended," she decided. "Prince Efflam, you must put on your Sunday suit."

The half-grown daughter began to joke with Efflam.

"Hurry up and put on Joseph's fine suit! We, who are used to princes, can't sit down to table with a robber."

Robber, robber, he said to himself as he went up to his room. The fear that something would be suspected, that they could read his thoughts, came over him again. But he also felt annoyed at the way the family spoke to him. They were beginning to take too many liberties, those three downstairs. It was about time he stopped all this running errands and fetching water. It made them disrespectful, and that they must never be. He felt that he was more than ever forced to keep up his position as a prince. No one should have permission to suspect and believe that he was not born a gentleman, yes, royal even—ha, ha!

With a short, piercing laugh, that made the listening neighbours start with surprise, he went into his own room.

Without looking round and without throwing a single glance out of the window, for he did not want to see the great, swollen mass of water out there, he took down his Sunday suit and pulled off his borrowed clothes.

Then he listened—tense. Through the thin boards between his room and the carpenter's down below he heard a new voice. A strange voice, but still well known. Now Blanche was speaking:

"No, Marie-Jeanne, you must not go up just now. He is changing his clothes. Wait here for a moment and drink coffee with us."

He shivered where he stood undressed, and hastened with shaking fingers to put on the long flannel underclothes. He shivered from a new kind of fear.

It was she, Marie-Jeanne, his virgin-mother, who was down there. God Jehovah, do not let her come up to me!

He felt startled. Was he not praying to his parents' old God? The Ancient of Days, as they used to call him. This Jehovah who boasted that he had no hell, but who allowed his supporters to forget his commandment to love their enemies and thunder instead: "Vengeance is mine——" His parents always went absent-mindedly their own way, with their books about Jehovah and the *fata morgana* of the millennium. Deep within him—he, Gilles—the evil had been formed and ripened and finally demanded expression. He, Capart-Napoleon, did not need to turn to the Jehovah of vengeance. They were taken as rabbits in a cage where they sat with their friends, their books and their writings. These writings that were against everything, and therefore also against Nazi-ism, thus giving him the opportunity he needed. Yes, just the opportunity he needed. He who—he who never had—he who wished—who never——

He wept and trembled and could not get on his clothes. Then there was someone in there with him, someone who had come up the stairs and into the room in soft felt socks. His head instinctively sank down, longing to lean against this someone, but he remained standing passively with hanging arms and a bent, sorrowful head, only just touching the little creature. She also scarcely touched him, while she fastened the buttons of the thick under-vest, held out the trousers to him as if he were a little boy, helped him into the tight jacket and its still tighter buttonholes,

and combed the hair of his bent head. Then she left him and they had not said a word to each other.

Efflam stood there ready dressed in his red fishing costume, unevenly faded, but well fitting. He was no longer a robber. He shut his eyes tight and intoned as a lesson he must never forget:

"I am Efflam Kelou. I am a prince." He was a gentleman, he must keep up his domineering ways so that they would fear him, so that they would never forget what he was, would never have time to think.

He saw himself again such as he had been in his shining top-boots. He remembered that he had once sat in a car with officers who also wore shining top-boots and a great deal else that shone and glittered. He must be like that: stiff and high-handed in his manner, always superior.

Again he wanted to laugh his new, unpleasant laugh, which, however, became unsteady because of the tears that still hung heavily in his throat. Nevertheless, he thought that he could now see the significance of his earlier life and all that he had learnt in such strange ways; all the languages he had been able to pick up from his parents' unusual friends and their studies and their closet readings. Then there was the art of ruling in which he had had lessons. Yes, all this led to what he was now—the prince.

Efflam, Prince Efflam!

As if to confirm what he had just been thinking, they called him from the Kérlaérecs' kitchen. They were waiting for him. But he was tired and had no desire to go down. In spite of everything, he was afraid that he would not be able to behave with the stiffness befitting his supposed station. Marie-Jeanne, by her short visit, had made him incapable of behaving like that. He felt tired out. If only he might rest a little he would be able to do better.

He turned towards the bed to lie down. Then it was as if for the first time he recognised himself, was really at home with himself in Efflam's room. Within these bare, almost empty walls stood the big bed with the high feather bolsters, the only thing that made the room a home. In that bed he had lived so strongly and thought so much.

His eyes lighted on the crucifix on the wall. If it were broken, yet it had the power to make his life whole. As if illuminated by

a streak of lightning, which cut sharp and hard—which did not disappear, but stayed there with its penetrating light—he saw for the second time the two parts of his life as a whole now in complete and fearful clearness. But the first period did not, as he had before deluded himself into thinking, lead naturally up to the second. There was a horrible difference, and something repulsive, something contrary to nature connected them together.

It was not as an Efflam and a 'prince' that he had continued the broken life here on this shore, but as——

O God—Marie-Jeanne's God! Small saints!

He looked fearfully at the crucifix, but had not the strength to lift his arms towards it. They sank down on the bed, and he hid his face and remained lying there.

'Robber, robber,' echoed in him again. Yes, he had been a robber. He who had believed himself to be—— O Marie-Jeanne's little St. Teresa!

The worst of the robbers, the one who had mocked the crucified one.

A thief and a murderer. There was still blood on his arms, on his breast, all his clothes were red with blood.

He was as if delirious, shuddering when he saw his own clothes. Terrified, he tried to wipe away the red from the material and afterwards wipe his own hands.

It stayed there. He could not get it off. Like the image of the crushed face in which finally only the eyes, like two glassy fish eyes, had remained to look at him until he had beaten them out with the head of the axe. With the axe which he had found in the car and had afterwards slung out into the forest. He must make the dying man with the blue eyes and snub nose into an unrecognisable corpse impersonating himself, for he wished to live, but it was essential that he should be struck off the list of the living. It was after the car accident on the slope, when the heavy lorry lay a wreck, and he and the driver had been thrown out, and he had heard the other groaning and praying while he himself was alive and unhurt—it was then the idea came to him. He did not wait until the injured man was really dead, he beat and beat and beat. Beat his face to make him unrecognisable. Then he put on the man's coat, seeing to it that the money and the identity papers were in the pockets. His own papers he left

behind. Last of all he had set fire to the wreckage of the car to which he had dragged the dead man.

He had continued his way a new man with the new papers that made him Fernand Lerberghe. Even after this his life had continued as an endless wandering. Now he wandered about as a robber as well as a beggar, until one day quite unexpectedly he stood in front of a police station—usually he avoided such things—but here he stood, and for a moment was unable to move from the spot. It hung there still, the picture of his old self, of Gilles with the long Capart nose, but at its side there was a newer poster, the picture of Fernand Lerberghe, the real Fernand, the dead Fernand.

For a long time he was unable to move from the spot. The dead eyes, which were still so alive, looked at him from the picture. They continued to look at him, to chase him wherever he went, until one day he reached the coast—not his own home coast—that he would never have dared to approach, but the west coast.

Here in the district of La Rochelle he waited for an opportunity to get out of the country. He thought he would go to Belgium, where he knew the language—and, after all, Fernand Lerberghe was born a Belgian. One evening as he walked in a little unknown village, where he had not been able to find a lodging for the night, he wandered in a depressed mood down to the harbour and climbed into a jolly-boat tied up to the pier. There he had slept for a couple of hours, and when he woke he found the boat was drifting. He let it drift.

The stolen papers that made him into the Belgian Lerberghe were lost like everything else. They had not been of any service to him. Had they been of any service to him?

Yes. They had made him a murderer as he had before been a betrayer. A thief, a Judas, all in one person. With the blood sticking to his hands and to his clothes. Sticking to this shining, bright red costume. This victory suit, Joseph's victory suit. Joseph, who longed to fight and come back as a victor, but who was taken prisoner and shot down there among the dunes.

His thoughts paused for a moment, and he felt the cold sweat trickle and creep as vermin down his body. This feeling that something was creeping and stinging was so unendurable that for a moment he had to emerge from this stillness that was devoid

of thought. His brain must think further: Joseph who was shot at dawn one April morning and was buried in the sand down there in the bay might have been one of the victims of his betrayal! Joseph, whose costume he was now wearing.

He got up and laughed like a madman while he wandered round the darkening room. The resurrected Judas, that was what he was.

Judas. Ah——! He put his hand to the narrow, buttoned-up neckband of the jacket as if he were suffocating. Was not the mark of the rope still there? The rope with which he had hanged himself after he had received the silver pennies.

Was this the reason why he used to feel so at home beneath the bell-rope over there in the chapel?

Down in the Kérlaércs' flat they waited and waited for the man above until at last they felt obliged to eat their meal without him.

"Eat, Marie-Jeanne," said the carpenter quietly and in a friendly voice. "You are getting thin, you work too hard and eat too little."

But Marie-Jeanne could do nothing but drink a little coffee from her bowl. How quiet it was up there. She heard steps, but only one or two. Then—stillness. After a time two light bumps, as if someone had banged his clenched fists—or knees—on the floor, and then again a silence that turned her to stone.

Time passed endlessly. Lucienne had long ago cleared the table and gone out to her companions; the others sat on quietly like Marie-Jeanne herself, sinking themselves without noticing it into the darkness of the room. At last they heard signs of life. Steps, violent steps, backwards and forwards. And laughter, a dreadful laugh, the laugh of an unhappy person. Steps again, but only one or two, and then silence again.

Suddenly a heavy thud that made them all jump.

"He's fallen!"

Gérard was the first up the stairs. He was in such a hurry that he took them in three long strides. Blanche hurried also, but more heavily, the light wooden staircase creaked under her weight. Marie-Jeanne dragged after them as quickly as she could.

When she arrived, the husband and wife had already lifted

Efflam from the floor on to the bed. She helped them to unloosen the buttons she had buttoned only a very short time ago. She prayed to all the saints, to St. Teresa, to God, for him she loved so much.

Efflam was back at work in the carpenter's shop, where the dark cross stood as before, leaning against the wall. He avoided looking at it, so was obliged all the more to watch his employer's hands with their stumped fingers which had been injured and removed. When he had stared at them long enough he grew afraid that he would forget and betray himself. Nevertheless, he could not keep himself from gazing at that hand, again and again, with the broad gap between the thumb and the third finger.

Those hands that had taught him to work in wood had had the same gaps and curious nail-less stumps. He and his father had worked together first of all in the little mountain village between Marseilles and Toulon, where he had been born. His father was always absorbed in his 'studies' and the teaching that he had brought with him when he returned from his prisoner-of-war camp somewhere far to the north after the First World War. Almost against his will the Bible texts which he continually heard were imprinted in Gilles's memory, often in English, as his father studied the translations of the Bible in as many languages as possible. Also many of those who came to the meetings were travelling Americans, or those who had lived for a long time over in the land in which the teaching had originated.

His parents also went to America and stayed there for several years. That was after they had settled down in Marseilles. He was only a child then and had been given into the charge of a family who had a flat in the same house. Something must have happened to those neighbours, for they handed him over in their turn to another family, the Jezegabels, who were just on the point of moving and took him with them to their new home on the other side of Toulon. It was here that he learnt Breton, for it was the family's native dialect. He also became familiar with the Catholic Church and the saints.

He was not, however, confirmed. The Jezegabels would not agree to it, as it would have been against the wishes of his parents. He was there when Alexis, his foster-brother, who was the same

age, went before the bishop to be confirmed. He went with the family to the photographer afterwards, and as a joke fell on his knees before the crucifix up there on the photographer's wall. They all said that he looked more pious than did the actual candidates for confirmation themselves.

When his parents, Aristide and Ida, returned he went back with them to the hot, dusty home in the long, grey street in one of the endless, grey suburbs of Marseilles. Night and day the windows rattled as the trams passed and repassed just outside. The factories round them clanged and clattered and wrapped the neighbourhood in soot and smoke. In the rare pauses between the trams were heard the rattle and clank of the cranes and the hooting of the boats. The hooting always disturbed him, and this part followed him through life. When he looked out of that workshop window on the ground-floor he could see nothing beyond the trams but a dirty grey wall on which battle-cries and communistic signs were chalked. It was on this same wall that he himself later tarred large, black swastikas. But the boats that he could not see, but only heard in the distance, always troubled him.

When the parents were away on their journeys as colporteurs, he himself wandered round the harbour or through the streets in the centre of the city. He walked along the fine, broad Cannebière, but he was always a little frightened of it. He went up to the railway station and looked at the trains and listened to all the languages of the world. He also climbed the hill from whence he looked across to another hill on the other side of the town. He saw her there—standing on the top of her tower, that lovely lady with the child in her arms, looking out over the sea and the harbour and with the town at her feet. She roused his curiosity and his longing, and one day he went right up to her. He went into the chapel and into the church itself. He bought one of the small, blue-enamelled stars, bearing the picture of the lady, to keep as an amulet.

His mother found it when she was tidying his clothes, and his father forced him to throw it out of the window. It fell into the dust on the top of a passing tram.

Later on it was the turn of his parents to take a free trip. Once again they had to make a journey northward—to a concentration camp from which they never returned. Let them take their God

Jehovah with them to the place from which they had brought Him.

Kér-laérec went out on business, and Efflam remained alone in the workshop. He went on working at what he was doing mechanically, but now that the long, mutilated carpenter's hands were not there, other things began to trouble him.

The cross by the wall gave him no peace—he seemed to see it even when he turned his back on it. He had made it himself with these very same hands that now held the marking-iron and the wood with which he was working. With these same hands with which he had pointed out the 'guilty' people. These same hands which had held the pen when he had written those letters of denunciation.

These same hands that had held the axe that night on the edge of the wood.

The perspiration dripped from him as he stood with his back to the silent—no, the speaking—cross. Dust and sawdust lay thick on it now.

He, Judas, had made it. What business had a Judas with a cross? A rope was his ladder to heaven—no, rather his ladder to hell.

Abruptly he turned round, caught hold of the cross, drew it away from the wall and threw it on to the floor. It clattered and echoed noisily as it fell. The chips lying around were carried by the air pressure to the sides of the shop. Then he caught hold of an axe and lifted it for a blow. At that moment he stopped and looked at the tool in his lifted hand. Like this, with the head of an axe, had he hit out that time. They had shone at him through the darkness, those eyes which he had been obliged to smash.

Ah, ah! He shrieked in wildness and terror. Then he slashed, just there where the head should be, the head with the crown of thorns. Just there, a little above where the arms and the upright were joined. Afterwards he went on and broke up the whole cross.

When Kér-laérec returned he found his assistant working as before, but on the floor between the two benches lay, to his surprise, a big heap of dark wood cut into short pieces. He looked

questioningly at Efflam, but stopped and coughed nervously when he saw the expression on the other man's face. It was evil, it was ugly. Efflam immediately broke the silence, and with a voice that matched the expression on his face, he said:

"There's some kindling for Madame Blanche."

"Indeed," answered the carpenter shortly. He bent down and took up a piece of wood in which one of the big nails still remained. He stood there silent and sad and then wrenched it loose. Then he spoke, but in a low voice and with only his usual friendliness in it:

"The end of the week are feast days, and the big *Pardon* at Pont l'Abbé, in the Tréminou chapel. It looks as if the weather will be fine. Won't you take a holiday and go over there, Monsieur Kelou?"

"Why don't you call me Prince, Monsieur Kér-la-éc?"

The carpenter looked up questioningly: the ugly expression on the other's face had now given place to something more solemn. The older man sighed and put the bit of wood he was holding in his hand down with a gesture of resignation. He had never understood his assistant, and he had often—he now remembered—been filled with strange misgivings as to what would happen. He spoke again, and for the first time there was a note of impatience and irony in his voice:

"I beg your pardon, Prince, for neglecting to use your proper title. I'll try and do better in future. Would it please your Excellency to take a holiday on Saturday and Sunday and go to the *Pardon* at Pont l'Abbé? It is necessary from time to time for each of us to examine our hearts and visit the holy places."

"Not for me, Monsieur Kér-la-éc. You see what I have done with the cross. One of my lineage does not mix with the rabble."

"No, naturally not. No, no," said the carpenter, again with the light tinge of irony, but also with a weariness in his voice that gave evidence of the deep disappointment he felt.

He went out to the door and rolled himself a cigarette. While he smoked he thought that neither could he go to the *Pardon* this year. He had always been a doubter, and if he were honest with himself his doubts were still there, although for a time he had been near to thinking that he believed.

During the day Efflam allowed himself more and more to become the prey of evil thoughts. It strengthened him, this feeling of resentment against the conditions in which he found himself. It helped him to keep his head high and show that he belonged to the upper class. But at night when the big bed received him and the crucifix on the wall stood out in the constantly recurring beams of the lighthouse, his hardness and resentment vanished, and he trembled over his own error in thinking himself to be someone whose name he did not now even dare to whisper. And he wept over the life he had lived in that other world from which he had come, over the life behind that darkness which had come to him with his death by water, when his memory had been taken from him. He wanted to take down the little crucifix and do with it what he had done with the cross in the workshop. But whenever he approached it, it was as if his hand were burnt by something hotter than fire. He could only lie there weeping over himself.

The worst of all was that face from whose eyes he could never escape. It had been terrible when his own countrymen whom he had betrayed had been tortured; their cries continued to echo in his ears. Frightful also was the memory of that soldier's back—that thick green coat penetrated by the shots, and then the sound of the falling body, but the very worst of all was, however, the time when the little Society of Bible Readers were lifted into the lorry. Among them was that pair of woman's eyes that gazed and gazed, remaining with him even to this day. And those arms thrown above the head of the man with the long nose—and the cry of: "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. I will repay."

Thus it was, vengeance went on! Going like an unsatisfied beast of prey from person to person, from nation to nation.

If only he had not denounced his parents! If only he had left them alone. If only he had said 'No' to those indefinable longings to set himself up above others, for, when all was said and done, he had nothing very serious to revenge.

If only he had not denounced his parents! He remembered that at one time he had looked up to his father, admired him. His mother always chose to go from door to door with her tracts, but his father sought out places where many people came together. He went from fair to fair. Between times he worked at home in the town like all the others who had stalls in the market, and who

put up their stalls in the morning in the narrow streets that opened into the big boulevards. One Sunday morning his mother sent him, Gilles, to his father with a message, and there in the row of traders shrieking their wares stood Aristide with his table covered with books and journals. On the other counters and barrows were great red pieces of meat, white pork and bloody liver. Dead hens tied together and living hens cackling noisily. Also strongly-smelling cheeses, barrels of salted olives, barrels of salted, rank-smelling anchovies, shell-fish and other fish. There were also vegetables and fruit. Only his father dealt in things other than food. On his table lay the Bible and books by Russell and Judge Rutherford, together with *La Tour de la Garde*, The Watch Tower.

Aristide Capart stood out distinctly from among the rest. He was almost too long and lanky. He looked almost as if his legs had been drawn out because his head tried to reach so high—up above the clouds. At any rate, above the clouds of flies round the food-stalls.

Aristide wanted to go away on some business or other, so he asked his son to keep an eye on his stall. How he hated his father then! He was chained, as it were, to the pile of books, exposed to the sneering remarks and scornful glances of the passers-by. Oh, how he despised and detested his father!

When his father came back and Gilles was free, he did not go away at once, but stood a little way off, watching his father and the buyers he attracted to his stall. He saw him stretch out his long arm with the bony carpenter's hand towards the passers-by, offering them his tracts exposing the anti-Christ and dealing with the Wild Beast and its mystical numbers. Then a change came over the boy. Suddenly he admired his father, this father who gave up his own working time to this work and who exposed himself to so much scorn for the convictions that burnt within him.

Yes, then he admired his father—but only for a few short moments. If only he had remembered this when he wrote his letter of denunciation.

He burst into tears and fell asleep only towards morning.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THE SUN SHONE THROUGH THE CLOUDS, and the weather was unusually calm and clear for the time of year. The roving spirit awoke among the people, and many more than had at first intended to do so, put on their best clothes and betook themselves to the *Pardon* at Notre-Dame de la Tréminou outside Pont l'Abbé.

The carpenter's little family set off as did several others from the same house. Madame le Floch, who lived just opposite the Kérlaérecs, stayed at home because her husband was ill. One of the two artists whose rooms were opposite Efflam's also stayed in the village.

"I'm tired of these *Pardons*," said Herr Sixtus to his companion, "there's been nothing but *Pardons* all the summer. I'll stay at home and do some work."

"There's a great deal in what you say," answered his companion calmly, "but the churches and chapels are there after all, and in them as well as in the *Pardon* itself one can find much that satisfies one's wishes and desires. I, at any rate, shall take my bread and my bottle of wine and go there for a bit."

Efflam stayed in the village. Gérard Kérlaérec, after having received the discouraging answer that a man of good family does not mix with the rabble, did not again suggest that his assistant should come with them.

From many of the houses the whole family went. Marie-Suzette, however, stayed at home with her rheumatism, which increased as the autumn days grew shorter. Marie-Louise expected her husband back from the fishing and promised to look after the children for her sisters, who, wrapped in their big bearskin collars and in their best clothes, took their places in Buanic's lorry. Bernadette and Birgitte also went, but the three youngest, Eliane, Odile and Loulou, were obliged to content themselves with the promise of pancakes that Grandmama would make for them.

Marie-Jeanne stood there, she also dressed in her best, ready to go to the lorry when it appeared at the end of the street. She looked up at the sky, and her black brows were drawn together anxiously.

"I don't trust the weather, Maman," she said to Marie Le Donche, who was locking and barring the door with all the means at her disposal. Caroline answered instead of her mother:

"There's nothing wrong with the weather, Marie-Jeanne. Hugo says it promises well. My father-in-law says the same thing, and there are good reports on the radio."

"Yes," agreed the girl's mother. "I looked at the lighthouse last night, and its beams were quite clear; that always means fine weather."

'That's what everybody says,' thought Marie Jeanne. 'Everyone except my own heart. I feel so apprehensive, as if some dreadful misfortune were on its way. If only Efflam were coming with us, as Yves is giving us this free ride. But Blanche said he did not wish to come, he refused Gérard's invitation. If only I could stay at home, but Maman is so anxious that I should go with her.'

"I hear the lorry," shouted Caroline. "And there's Hugo standing up in it."

"Come along, my daughters," said the widow. In her eagerness she began to run towards the lorry with her stiff legs, while she pulled the old fringed shawl tighter round her. The wings of her coif flapped merrily. "Come, Marie-Jeanne, what are you waiting for? I've locked the door. We must not keep Yves waiting."

Marie-Jeanne also hurried, with little limping steps that hurt her hip. It was as if she herself were now making the dream come true: she was the woman who ran, ran, ran in despair. But she was empty-handed, she carried no heart, nothing in her hands. He, her all, her only joy, remained behind while the lorry took her away at terrifying speed as they rushed through the old streets and on to the highway.

There was the Drezens' high, three-storeyed house, its windows either shuttered or its window-panes empty, black-looking. On, on rattled the lorry.

There was shoe-maker Kerlivio's quarry, and the piece of ground he was trying to make into a garden. Then the road crossed open ground, and from her high seat she was able to look far out over the meadows. She was, of course, able to see a great deal farther than when she was walking. Everything lay there so clearly marked, the field path with its holes and ruts, she could

see it from the point where it branched off from the asphalted road until it lost itself among the other paths out there on the wide tract bordering on the sea-shore. This was the way she had come with Efflam the first time he had gone out after his illness. It was spring then and the larks were singing, and the air was strong and soothing. The happy summer dream had begun.

The hard, eager notes of the horn sounded as Yves increased the speed. Now the home meadows and the paths she knew so well could no longer be seen. Gone! They were all gone!

Why had she been obliged to come when she was so full of apprehension? If only she had been allowed to get off the lorry and walk along that field path!

Efflam did not wish to mix with the crowd, but he had a free day like everybody else, and so he went out, roaming through the empty village and the district round about. He saw the buses as they turned inland on their way to the *Pardon*. He also saw cycles, small cars, lorries, all going in the same direction. Yves Buanic's long, grey-blue lorry sped along the road filled with the women in their white coifs. Soon the road was as empty and desolate as the sea down there beyond the meadows. He stood alone, legs far apart, his hands in his pockets. But no, there was one other with him. Close to him, on the edge of the road. The Man on the cross.

The tall wayside cross stood there bearing its stone figure. His arms outstretched. In this, His great gesture, He was turned towards the southern bay, and the sun as well as all that the sea gave of storm and mist were thrown against Him.

'What is done is done,' thought Efflam, continuing the thoughts of his past life that had filled his brain. What did it help him now that he had for one fleeting moment admired his father? Was it his fault that he was as he was? Was it his fault that he had been made to throw the little blue, starry amulet on to the roof of the tram that bore it away?

"It was not my fault more than Yours," he said, and lifted his clenched fist towards the stone face on the cross.

"I also was sent," he continued with a laugh. "I had my mission too! If I had not existed, would You be hanging up there?"

No, he thought, answering his own question, as he began to walk along the uneven field path. That other man would never have attained to the place he had reached if he, Judas Capart, had not done that from which there was no escape. He had to live as the one he was, and that until this day.

He went on farther along the field path. The light wind from the north stroked his head and blew his hair forward so that it hung down over his forehead. He did not bother about it as he walked with his gaze lowered, brooding.

He felt that he was not now playing his rôle of prince as successfully as before—before, when it was neither a rôle nor a play, but truth and life. Now things were not going so well—now that it was so especially important that all around him should hang on to the idea that he was a foreign prince. That dark shadow figure behind him was propelling him towards something quite other than the supernatural figure so full of light to which he had before felt he belonged.

Remember what you did, look at what you were, whispered this dark figure. You were I, the traitor. You were I, the thief. This you were and this you are. You cannot get away from your destiny. The rope still hangs over you. If you must be a Judas, be a real Judas. One sin more or less will not alter the matter. All was fixed from the beginning. For it is written: 'Their number is a hundred and forty and four thousand.' Not one more than that number can ascend the hill of Zion or stand around the throne of the Lamb in the new Jerusalem above the clouds. 'And the number of the beast is the number of a man, and his number is six hundred, three score and six.'

Yes, that was what his parents' Bible said. The beast, the dragon—the murderer. He himself, Gilles, was the dragon, and he had seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his head. And he was in spiked armour with six hundred and sixty-six spikes, while the other one over there by the road had only two—one to the east and one to the west—— His head was above the clouds and his feet deep down in the bowels of the earth. But he himself was the dragon and moved freely and went his way freely. He was the ruler of this world, and therefore still a prince.

Thick clouds of cooking-smoke were wafted far out into the street from the Garrecs' kitchen, and Marie-Suzette's voice sounded from the middle of the thickest smoke-cloud:

"Children, children, you shall eat as much as you like, I've promised you that. But we must leave some for Prince Efflam. I can't understand why he's not here yet. It was arranged for him to eat with us, as Blanche and Gérard have gone to the *Pardon*. Did you see him down near the harbour, Marcel?" she asked her son-in-law, who had just returned from a ten-days' fishing trip and was sharing the children's meal at the table, unshaven as he was.

"I caught a glimpse of him," answered Le Lay. "He was swaggering along, but he turned his back on us as we came ashore. He was never any good as a fisherman, that long-nosed count, as I used to call him, but no harm meant, and there was no harm in him either, as far as I could see. Who knows? Perhaps he's a real prince—actually I often thought so myself. Nowadays he has grown as big a braggart as he's big-nosed, but he never dares to look you straight in the face. These pancakes are good for a starving fisherman, Mother-in-law. Give me another. Fill up my glass, Marie-Louise, if you don't begrudge your *patron* something good after all his hardships."

"You shall have another, Marcel," answered the old woman. "Eat as many as you like, for now I have set some aside for Prince Efflam. I'm sorry you speak of him as you do, for, after all, he has brought us fishing luck this summer. You have fished better than most of them. But now I have a premonition of something evil. I've such a strange pricking feeling in my heart—Here you are, little Eliane, here's the parcel with the pancakes. Take them to Prince Efflam and wish him the best from us all."

As usual, Eliane ran off happily with the packet under her arm. The way was well known to her, and her feet were intimate with every stone and hollow and with every little mound formed by empty crab claws and shells that had been thrown out. Her sabots clattered, but they were like two wings bearing her along so that she might get all the quicker to the Drezens' big house. She still only wore socks, and her sunburnt legs above them were round and straight, but too long, as they often are in growing children when they shoot up, leaving their frocks behind them. Eliane's

frock was like a short, wide ballet-skirt high right up round her hips. A thick blue woollen cardigan competed with the blue of her eyes.

She slipped off her clogs in the hall and rushed without stopping straight up the stairs—she knew, of course, that her relatives on the lower floor were at the *Pardon*. She knocked at Efflam's door and waited for the well known: 'Come, Eliane.' He always knew it was she.

To-day all was silent. She knocked again and again, turning and pulling at the door-handle, but the door remained closed and silent. Disappointment trembled on her lips, and she was on the verge of tears when she heard a voice from below. It was Madame Le Floch.

"It's no good knocking, Eliane. Monsieur Kelou is not at home. You can leave the pancakes with me if you like."

Still disappointed, Eliane came down the stairs, but as she stood there in the narrow hall, handing the packet to the fisherman's wife, she felt a bump as the door, which opened inwards, was pushed from the outside. The tall artist came in with all his painting gear. Monsieur Sixtus never had time to concern himself with the people around him like his amiable companion, Ludwig, nevertheless he knew most of those who came and went. To-day, satisfied with his work and the solitude the day had given him, he was more talkative than usual.

"Good-day, Eliane," he said. "Are you looking for your Prince?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Come with me, I know where he's gone. I'll show you."

He left his painting materials in the house and went out again. Madame Le Floch went back into her flat, and from her windows she saw the two, the tall stranger and the child, walking along hand in hand. A little farther on they turned off from the asphalt road and for a time she still saw the top part of the man's body and the child's blue hair-ribbon before the stone walls of Kerlivio's patch hid them from view.

Eliane thanked her cavalier and went off alone down the meadow. She was so eager to reach the red-clothed figure far away that she ran on without paying attention to the uneven patches in the ground or the packet she carried. The damp had penetrated

the thin paper of the bag and made it tear easily, so that one of the pancakes fell out and lay upon the path. She did not notice it, but ran on. Now she was so near that he should be able to hear her call.

"Prince Efflam, Prince Efflam, ahoy! Efflam, wait!" she shouted.

He turned towards her, and now the big wooden shoes were again like wings with which she flew along, while her short little dress stood out like a parachute above the long, brown legs. Another pancake fell out of the packet and remained lying where it fell.

Towards evening the buses began to come back from Pont l'Abbé—so did the bicycles and cars and lorries. Yves Buanic's lorry stopped between the small dry-stone walls of old Kervily. The travellers jumped down or were lifted down by Marcel Le Lay, who stood there, shaved and properly dressed, receiving them all. In the kitchen stood Marie-Suzette at the soup-kettle, and Marie-Louise was laying the table, rattling the plates as she did so. Odile and Loulou jumped excitedly round the returned wanderers and were given the toys people had bought for them at the fair.

"But where is Eliane?" Marie-Pierre burst out. "Is she indoors helping her aunt lay the table? Come, Eliane, I've something for you."

"And I have too," shouted Guillaume. "Come quickly, Eliane. Your granddad has something for you."

Marie-Louise stepped out of the door and said:

"She's not here. She's running about with her little friends. She does nothing but run about the streets these days on her long legs."

"As late as all this?" said Marie-Pierre.

"She ought to have seen the lorry coming back," remarked Buanic, who had begun to polish his windscreen and mudguards.

"Hasn't she been back since she took the pancakes?" asked the grandmother. Marie-Louise thought for a moment, looked uncertain, wrinkled her forehead.

"No, now I come to think of it, she's not. That's strange, she's not been here the whole afternoon."

"She usually comes in and asks for bread-and-butter now and again," said the old woman by the fireplace. Guillaume had already take off his beret and put it on the rack near the attic stairs; now he pulled it on again.

"Then there's nothing for it but to go out and look for her. It's already getting dark."

"And I who promised to look after her," said Marie-Louise guiltily, "but I thought—she's a big girl now."

Yves was still working with his lorry. "Where are you going, Father-in-law?" he asked.

"I'm going to look for your daughter."

"Oh, Eliane. You stay at home, Father-in-law. I'm nearly ready, and then I'll go out and look for that street-walking youngster. It isn't your fault, anyhow, Marie-Pierre. Perhaps she's been infected by the lorry here who likes nothing better than to live on the roads. Well, now I'll be off."

Le Lay looked up the street. "Well, here comes the count," he said, "perhaps he can tell us where she went, since she was sent to take the pancakes to him."

They all looked relieved and waited for Efflam, who was coming straight to the house.

"Good-evening, Mesdames, good-evening, Messieurs," he said.

"Good-evening, my friend, Monsieur Efflam," said Guillaume in as friendly a voice as ever. He had forgotten that he had been told to walk a step behind his foster-son. "Where have you come from, my Prince? Where have you spent the day?"

"I come from La Joie," he answered. "Monsieur Garrec knows that I always go there for Vespers."

"But there were no Vespers there to-night," said Marie-Suzette.

"No, Madame," said Efflam, looking her straight in the face—but as if through her and past her. "There were no Vespers, but I did not know that. I waited there for long and thought that the door would be opened. You know how I usually wander along the shore; I am always about La Joie on Sundays."

"It was a pity that you found the doors closed, Monsieur," said Guillaume. "We are wondering where our little Eliane can be. Have you seen her?"

"Where did she go after she had given you the pancakes?" interrupted Marie-Louise before Efflam had time to answer.

"I don't suppose she was over there at La Joie?" asked Marie-Pierre.

"No, Madame," answered Efflam.

"Where did she go after she had seen you?" began Yves, and Efflam looked straight at him as he had before looked at his wife. This time also his gaze slid away without really looking at the face that was turned towards him.

"I do not know, Monsieur Buanic. I have not seen Eliane."

"Not?"

"Not seen her at all?"

"But what about the pancakes, then?"

"I do not know, Madame. I do not know, Monsieur. I come from the direction of the lighthouse and La Joie."

Anxiety increased. Darkness had fallen while they were talking. Guillaume pulled his beret still farther down on his head and went out to look for the missing child. The darkness grew more intense as it had begun to rain. Silently, but strongly, the rain fell on the slate roofs, on the stone walls, and ran in streams down the streets.

Efflam heard the rain on the asphalt in the road below his window. To-night he had taken his blankets and pillows into the room on the north side so as to get away from the crucifix. The darkness there was impenetrable and without a break, for the beams from the lighthouse could not be seen to-night. Instead the long-drawn-out, melancholy sound of the foghorn was heard cutting the noise of the rain into even sections of sound.

Later in the night when the rain had stopped, although the sirens continued because of the fog, he heard a strong far-away roar, stronger than the rain had ever been. It came from the cliffs of Saint-Fiacre.

'The Tal-Ifer,' he thought, 'the gate to hell. Why is it roaring so loudly to-night? Is it calling for its prey?' He felt infinitely forlorn.

'Marie-Jeanne, you have left me,' he thought. 'Your God and your small saints have left me. Or are you still praying for me? Have your prayers the power to relieve the torments, even of him who has no goal except the Tal-Ifer?'

He was tired. Deadly tired. It was as if he also now could say:

"It is finished." Evil had triumphed. His old nature had been so strong in him that in the very moment that the supporting will for good receded, it had rushed in and seized the power. Evil had avenged itself for the time during which it had been suppressed. It wished to show that 'All flesh is as grass'—indeed, like a bramble—even worse, a prickly hedge. He lay here bereft of all that could possibly have been put forward in his defence. No longer could it be said that he had become a different man, a repentant man. If he had hoped in secret that there was still pardon for him, that hope had vanished, he dared no longer believe in it. The darkness round and within him was complete, he saw no gleam of light. But however dark it was, he was never free from the eyes; his mother's questioning, ever-present gaze, the glassy eyes of the kind lorry-driver, and to these a third pair had now been added: two large, narrow Breton eyes. Eliane's blue eyes, crying dumbly, painfully questioning, shattered.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

IT WAS NOT until the following afternoon that, thanks to Madame Le Floch, those who were hunting for Eliane learnt in which direction they should look.

The fisherman's wife had taken her sick husband to hospital at Quimper and therefore knew nothing of what had happened until she came back to the village. Then she learnt that Buanic's little girl had disappeared.

"Eliane was here," she said to the child's aunt, Blanche. "She came with pancakes for Prince Efflam."

"Yes," said the red-eyed Blanche. "She was sent with the pancakes but she did not find Efflam, for he had gone to La Joie."

"To La Joie?" repeated Madame Le Floch. "Then that long-legged artist man lied. He said that——"

Suddenly she broke off, for a thought came to her which both frightened and enraged her.

"What is it?" asked the carpenter as he stood looking over his wife's shoulder, also deeply uneasy.

"It is—and imagine, he went off this morning. He took the morning bus with all his baggage as if he were moving. He took all those pictures of his with him too. The pictures of the children down on the shore from last summer when he crept about looking at our little ones. He painted them absolutely naked, sinfully naked. He took it all away with him. I expect he was the last to see Eliane yesterday."

"That's strange," said Gérard, "we had not heard that he was moving. Monsieur Ludwig is still here, isn't he?"

"Yes. He went to the *Pardon*. My poor husband and I hadn't a wink of sleep last night, they talked so loudly as if they were quarrelling and went on talking until dawn. Monsieur Sixtus accused his friend of being an idler and a reactionary who encouraged superstition. Monsieur Ludwig on his side said the other was unimaginative and unsociable. And he was right enough! Monsieur Sixtus has always been irritable with us below him if we've dared to make a noise or raise our voices, the ceiling-boards being as they are! He was the last to see Eliane. He ought to know where she is—he must have a bad conscience—going off suddenly like that."

Then Madame Le Floch told them how she had offered to take care of Eliane's parcel of pancakes but the artist had intervened. She described how they had gone off together, he leading the child until they had disappeared below Kerlivio's heaps of stones.

They acted on the information the fisherman's wife gave them and went in that direction along the rain-soaked road. The deep, narrow hoof-marks were full of grey slush, and the marks they made with their clogs and boots soon turned into little pools. They followed the path towards the wet, misty shore-meadows that lay there, so ill-omened and silent. Beyond them thundered the sea in its greyness. Bernadette, who was with them, looking for her sister, suddenly bent down.

"Look, there's a pancake," she said.

They all looked. It was indeed a rolled-up pancake, now nothing but milky paste.

A little farther on the watchful Bernadette found still another pancake. They did not know whether to take these small traces of the lost child as encouraging or the opposite.

It was easy to survey this flat, open tract. The only place where

anything could be concealed was a low, grass-grown hollow where at some time or other sand had been dug and carried away. A thicket of dark, spiky furze had spread itself out in the shelter of the low slope of the hollow. In this hiding-place they found Eliane, badly maltreated, dead.

The clear tinkling of little bells was heard from the road, and those occupants of the Drezens' house who were not walking in the procession hurried to the windows. Efflam stood hidden behind the curtain in his room.

The little bells rang on. The darkly-shining crucifix, carried high on a pole, came into sight. An open book was carried through the light rain. The sound of intoning and singing rose over the sinister creaking of the wheels of the hearse and the rhythmic menace of the innumerable tramping sabots. The coffin in under the roof of the black hearse was small and scarcely visible, but the procession that followed it seemed never-ending. The blue costumes of the men shone in the rain. The wide, heavy capes of the many women billowed as the long procession marched past. From beneath those ankle-length capes was heard the tramp of the sabots on the road—hard, hard, inexorably hard.

Foremost in the procession walked the nearest relations. They walked with bowed heads beneath the dark hoods of their capes. From the heads of the other women rose, as always, the high, narrow mitre-coif. These hundreds of shining coifs that shone above the many voluminous capes carried the mind to the rocking surf that crowned the heavy waves of the autumnal sea.

Monsieur Ludwig could be seen in his window in the middle flat. He stood there weeping as if he belonged to these people.

The long human procession had now passed with its bells and crosses, with the hearse at its head. It followed the twists and turns of the road to the ship-like church with its many towers over there in the main village. Efflam carefully moved the curtain to one side, pushed out his head and greeted his neighbour.

"Good-day, Monsieur Ludwig! Why isn't your friend, Monsieur Sixtus, with you?"

Monsieur Ludwig started, caught off his guard. He had not expected to see Efflam there.

"Aren't you at the funeral, *Monsieur le Prince*? I thought you

would be with the family. I had a great desire to go, but I was a little uncertain. You see, Monsieur, I am not a Catholic, not yet at any rate, and I am uncertain what one does on these occasions. But it was really for my friend's sake that I stayed at home. You asked about Sixtus. We quarrelled and he went away, you must have heard that. The worst is that he is suspected and has been stopped and held in Rennes."

"I am sorry to hear that, Monsieur," said Efflam, drawing back into his own room. "Allow me to say *au revoir*. I hope you will have a good day."

"Marie-Jeanne, you have left me. You have gone to the towers and the crosses over there, you like all the rest. To that forest of crucifixes that grows inside the high grey walls. Soon another tiny forest of crosses will grow up—the many crosses, great and small, that will be set up and laid on Eliane's grave.

"But, Marie-Jeanne, perhaps you are praying also for the souls of those who are unhappy. Then pray for him who can no longer hear the bells, only the rising roar from the cliffs over there in the north. There at the end of those two copper-red, blood-red railway lines."

Efflam went out just as he was and stood bare-headed in the rain and the increasing storm. Then he began to walk, following the railway lines as so often before. Tremendous storm-clouds approached from the north-west, chasing away the rain. By the time he reached the village on the north side they were already over the headland, and driving clouds of salt water swept through Saint-Fiacre and enveloped him. Soon he encountered streams of water rushing down the streets, turning them into regular rivers. The cascades breaking over the pier and breakwater rose to tower-like heights. The water broke over the protective wall at the end of the short streets and rushed forward in a broad, irresistible flood.

But the sea itself was dissolved into a blinding, greenish-grey mist. Behind the impenetrable mist there was a strong, threatening rumble, which varied but was never silent. Shadow-like forms appeared and disappeared in the mist between the houses. Voices came upon the wind and were carried away before the words had been properly grasped.

Efflam crouched down and crept along the wall of the last house to a lonely place close to the flooded breakwater. The rocky point out there was visible only as something high and shadowy in the mist. He could get no farther out. Groping his way as if in the dark, he got away from this exposed place up on to the flat ground behind, where stood the many blocks of stone. Here he crept into a cleft in a rock that had split. He lay there for the rest of the day and the whole night.

Throughout the next day, while the storm raged round him, he stayed in his hiding-place, and then again another night. When the day came again he began to scrape together the lichen, as an animal might, and pushed it into his mouth.

When it was so calm again that the shore was visible and the sea was nothing but rolling waves, he went out on to the rocks and stood there holding fast to the iron railing—that corroded, sharp, rusty railing, below which the cross was welded into the granite itself. Thoughts still moved in his benumbed brain.

'Still another cross,' he thought. 'Is there a cross at Tal-Ifer itself? Is the entrance to Hell marked with a cross?'

'Oh, Marie-Jeanne, do you also pray for the souls who deserve nothing but death and condemnation? Pray, Marie-Jeanne, pray——'

The carpenter Kér-la-érec had lost his assistant, but there was little work at this time of year, and what there was he managed easily himself and even closed the workshop several days in the week. It was not the first time that a young assistant had left his work without ceremony. He had had many assistants, in fact, he could not remember them all, and found it difficult to differentiate the one from the other. True, there had been something different about the last one, or he had begun to think so.

Kér-la-érec rolled his cigarettes and philosophised and came to the conclusion that life was in reality meaningless, but that it had to be lived, and one could but make the best of a bad job.

Blanche sat at the window, working incessantly to collect enough money for her daughter's schooling and to be able to renew the girl's wardrobe. When the weather was oppressive she suffered from melancholy, and the red wine tempted her. She went through the postcards that remained in her box of souvenirs from

the summer that had just passed—the cards she had not been able to sell. They were for the most part pictures of churches and chapels, especially of those that were ruins: of the roofless village church and the ruin in Plovan and the lovely ancient Calvary of Trenoën.

She put down her postcards and gazed outward, as she always did, far, far away across the flat fields to the sea, and she thought with melancholy of the summer that had just passed. Perhaps it had not been so very different from other summers, but the dreams came and went, as did the clouds over the promontory—now from the south, now from the north, now from the west. Variable it was, yet ever the same.

The red-faced gendarme cycled around on his official business. He had felt obliged to report that Monsieur So-and-So whom he had been told to keep under observation had disappeared from his lodgings. He was given orders to make inquiries, and he therefore took a colleague with him, and went a trip through the villages, and stopped now and again and questioned the inhabitants. The fishermen who generally stood in groups under the lee wall shrugged their shoulders, spat and scratched their heads behind their peaked caps, which they pulled still further down on to their foreheads, spat again, and then shook their heads seriously in a wordless 'no' and 'nothing known'.

Out in Saint-Fiacre there was, however, someone who said that they had seen a red shadow in the sea mist that stormy night. Another person thought a few days later that he had seen a kind of ghost moving up there on the cliffs after the storm.

The gendarme and his colleague went right out on to the point. They climbed cumbrously about among the rocks in their stiff, high boots.

"Look," said one of them. "Is this anything?" And he held out a piece of red stuff, a torn jacket that had fastened in a crevice.

"That?" said the other. "Why, that's the ordinary red material that is used for the fishermen's suits. I expect it's part of his clothes. We'll report that the missing man has been drowned."

Guillaume-Marie Garrec dragged his stiff leg behind him as he walked. He also dragged his cow behind him, still as thin as ever,

on a long rope, several metres long. It was late in the year, but there was still a little green down there in the shore-meadows, and it was important to let the cow 'graze out of doors as long as possible. He had not much fodder for the winter. It was only that he felt so reluctant to go over there to the meadows. The spirit of that innocent creature, his unhappy granddaughter, Eliane, still hovered there. It must be admitted that life was cruel and inexplicable, since they had not even been able to find the murderer and give him his just punishment. That foreigner whom they questioned had been exonerated as there was not sufficient evidence against him. And here he was, old and stiff in the leg, and without so much as a son to carry on the name of Garrec. If only he had been able to find relief in religion, but he was a doubter, a confirmed doubter.

There came Jehan Lescantin. He was probably on his way to the Municipal Offices to arrange something for his son. Hugo was off on a long sea trip, but before he went, he and Caroline were to be married. Guillaume pulled his beret further down on to his head and spat into the ditch as he greeted the other man. Then he dragged the sluggish cow along the meadow path——

He was right, Jehan Lescantin was on his way to arrange some of the many formalities for his son's wedding. The boy had now made up his mind to become a professional sailor. He had signed on in a steamship bound for Indo-China. Before he went he must marry the girl to whom he was betrothed. 'Alas,' thought Lescantin, 'what small mice we are in the claws of the cat we call life.' His daughter-in-law was now in her time of waiting, but her true husband would doubtless go to sea as a pure and inexperienced youth. Hugo was going with his patron saint, Jeanne d'Arc, in his mind. But he, Jehan, loved the Holy Mother of God herself, Our Lady of Joy, as she stood out there by the wild sea. He kept her in his heart. Or he tried to do so. For he was still weak in faith, in spite of everything, he was still weak in faith.

Marie-Jeanne sat with one foot resting on a brick foot-stool and her sabots by her side. She kept her ball of thread in one of them so that it should not roll out on to the floor and get dirty. Her fingers were as deft as ever with the crochet-hook. When there

was an hour of sunshine during the variable day she went out and stood in some sheltered place with her work. Her eyes travelled longingly to the horizon and lingered far away beyond the boiling breakers.

To-day the line of the horizon was blurred and altogether grey, as depressing as was the sea during the winter months. But she had seen it different. She had seen the silver line out there like a bridge between heaven and earth. Out there, where it met the far-away unknown, the sea could shine as the forehead of the Queen of Heaven.

Neighbour Tanneau arrived with a pailful of mussels and gave them some. He also repeated the latest rumour:

The policemen had been out there to Saint-Fiacre. They had found several pieces of clothing, and the vanished carpenter's apprentice was said to have been drowned among the rocks. The sea had not been especially heavy, a contrary wind had sprung up and toned down the sea almost immediately after the great storm. But something seemed to show that that single deep-sea wave, which came when it was least expected, had broken over the coast in the darkness of the night and taken its human prey. No one knew anything for certain, but a human life is lost so easily.

"Look here, Marie Le Donche, here's another handful of mussels. There's not much in them, but there's always something. And they taste salt and good on the bread."

Marie-Jeanne hid her work in the pocket of her dress and wrapped herself in a shawl. Then she walked quickly out of the short alley, round the corner at Jegou's and through the streets till she was out on the main road. In her limping way, with steps that were tripping, but at the same time long, giving the impression of a wave-like, rocking gait, she hurried forward along the almost straight road at the end of which stood the lighthouse, high and grey. When she had come as far as this she turned off and had again an open, almost straight, bit of road in front of her. It followed the coast and seemed to end in La Joie.

The road went on still farther, still with the open sea on the left. Now the roofs of Saint-Fiacre and the high factory chimneys came into sight. Already she saw the pier as it curved outwards, and the new breakwater over which the surf was splashing as it always did.

Marie-Jeanne walked rapidly through the sloping streets up towards the breakwater at their end

Now she stood where she very seldom came, beside the iron railing outside which the sea was never calm and never silent, where the witches' cauldron boiled and hidden masses of water rumbled like volcanoes. The light rainbow bridges came and went in the hovering dampness

They had names, all these rocks, and dizzy basins with their madly tumultuous water. *Au 'Gadornk'*—'the little chair'—should be here and Our Lady with her Child. Here should also be found something called Tal-Ifer

Marie Jeanne's thoughtful face grew anxious. Tal-Ifer, that was a dreadful name. Holy Joseph, people had perished here

They had perished again and again when the great wave came and fetched that which it was permitted to take. And now perhaps—her friend

She became aware of the cross in the rock at her feet and felt strengthened. She made the sign of the cross and prayed for all those who had lost their lives here

Marie Jeanne had stood there for a long time and was blown about and wet through when she suddenly drew back in terror because of something she saw shining in a crevice. Something red, a piece of paper or a piece of material. It was hooked on to the cliff a long way outside the railing quite out of reach. It must be a piece of the clothes they had found here, and they had just left it where it was. But she wanted to take care of it, if only she could get hold of it. She must reach it, she must

Creeping along, forgetful of her peril she ventured right outside the railing down towards the cross. She stretched out as far as she could, and with trembling fingers loosened the fluttering piece of red stuff. The lower seam was repaired in a well known manner. She herself had sewn those stitches. She folded the stuff and pushed it under her blouse, hiding it there

'A human life is lost so easily,' she thought, remembering their neighbour's words, and her tears mixed with the salt spray. She stayed there for a long time, praying

Marie Jeanne met only blank looks when she, with her speaking eyes, turned towards her relations and the inhabitants of the

village in fear and wonder over the one who was missing. No one would speak about Efflam, not even Uncle Guillaume.

Was it all a nothingness, empty air, an illusion, a dream? she asked herself. Her own dream of good and her fear and horror of evil? Something that never had been tangible or a reality? They denied it, all of them, she saw that in their faces. They did so with the evasive glances of a bad conscience, but steadily nevertheless. They did so in spite of knowing better. Perhaps the dream had been living for them also, although they did not wish to acknowledge it, but they were so sure and definite in their silence. That which she wished to establish through the speech of her own eyes had never existed. It could not have been, said their silence.

Kervily, the village with the great expanse of sky, still lay there beside the tremendous ocean. People went their way there as before, heavy and serious in their dark, gloomy clothes or their their glaring red ones. Death was never far away. The supernatural lay frighteningly large over them all, and they sensed it. But the other world was also large—the world of resignation, doubt and unbelief.

Marie-Jeanne cried bitterly over the memories and the sorrow with which she must always remain alone. Then suddenly she stopped weeping and stood there tearless and quiet. There was something near to her. Something immeasurably great and all-embracing.

Was it the wind from the sea, or was it Brittany's eternal, unexplainable miracle?

It was this, and yet a great deal more. Faith and prayer had won a victory over evil itself. Even over death. From the depths rose a soul cleansed, liberated towards lighter spheres. Marie-Jeanne could feel the wings spread out over her. The miracle of grace and salvation was consummated. She felt it, she knew this must be so.

This was the eternal miracle of love.